

No. 37

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ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY



JACK LIGHTFOOT'S NERVE OR A DESPERATE MUTINY AT THE "GYM"



BY MAURICE STEVENS

"We've stood it just about long enough, Lightfoot," sneered Wilson Crane, angrily, "and now some of us want a change in leader. See?"

Publishers' Note. "Teach the American boy how to become an athlete, and lay the foundation for a Constitution greater than that of the United States."—Wise sayings from "Tip Top." There has never been a time when the boys of this great country took so keen an interest in all manly and health-giving sports as they do to-day. As proof of this witness the record-breaking throngs that attend college struggles on the gridiron, as well as athletic and baseball games, and other tests of endurance and skill. In a multitude of other channels this love for the "life strenuous" is making itself manifest, so that, as a nation, we are rapidly forging to the front as seekers of honest sport. Recognizing this "handwriting on the wall," we have concluded that the time has arrived to give this vast army of young enthusiasts a publication devoted exclusively to invigorating out-door life. We feel we are justified in anticipating a warm response from our sturdy American boys, who are sure to revel in the stirring phases of sport and adventure, through which our characters pass from week to week.

ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY

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No. 37.

NEW YORK, October 21, 1905.

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Jack Lightfoot's Nerve;

OR,

A Desperate Mutiny at the "Gym."

By MAURICE STEVENS.

CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY.

Jack Lightfoot, the best all-round athlete in Cranford or vicinity, a lad clear of eye, clean of speech, and, after he had conquered a few of his faults, possessed of a faculty for *doing things* while others were talking, that by degrees caused him to be looked upon as the natural leader in all the sports Young America delights in—a boy who in learning to conquer himself put the power into his hands to wrest victory from others.

Tom Lightfoot, Jack's cousin, and sometimes his rival; though their striving for the mastery was always of the friendly, generous kind. Tom was called the "Book-Worm" by his fellows, on account of his love for studying such secrets of nature as practical observers have discovered and published; so that he possessed a fund of general knowledge calculated to prove useful when his wandering spirit took him abroad into strange lands.

Ned Skeen, of impulsive, nervous temperament.

Nat Kimball, an undersized fellow, whose hobby was the study of *ju-jitsu*, and who had a dread of germs.

Lafe Lampton, a big, hulking chap, with an ever present craving for something to eat. Lafe always had his appetite along, and proved a staunch friend of our hero through thick and thin.

Brodie Strawn, one of the Cranford athletes, and a great admirer of Phil Kirtland.

Phil Kirtland, once Jack's bitter rival, but now a fair friend, and quite fond of Jack's pretty sister Daisy.

Reel Snodgrass, a boy who came from India, and kept matters pretty warm for Jack ever since his arrival at Cranford.

Wilson Crane, son of the town doctor, a boy who had some good points, yet who could it seemed crush down his conscience, and go back on a friend.

Bob and Bill Brewster, brothers who did not always see things alike, as frequently happens.

Jubal Marlin, a Yankee lad, keeper of the club mascot, and with an office at the "gym."

Bat Arnold, Nick Flint, a pair of tough young fellows who belonged to the "gang," and who held a grudge long standing against Jack.

CHAPTER I.

RUMBLINGS OF THE STORM.

On the high ground up along the railroad, Wilson Crane lay lazily in the warm autumn sun, talking with Ned Skeen and Bill Brewster, Bob Brewster's brother.

They could look down into the fair grounds from their cozy nest in the dry grass and see Jack Lightfoot and Reel Snodgrass engaged in football practice.

Jack was showing Reel the points of the game, and teaching him how to tackle the "dummy," and to kick and to run with the ball.

Naturally the three boys looking down into the fair grounds talked about them.

"There are a good many queer things about Jack," said Wilson. "Would you think he'd even speak to Reel, after all the dirt Reel did the nine last summer?"

"Howling mackerels, I wouldn't!" cried Skeen.

"Nor I," added red-headed Bill, who, though older than Bob, was thinner and slighter of build.

"Reel hired thugs to beat us to a pulp, bribed umpires against us, made sport of us, bet against our nine more times than one, and made fun of us all along."

The memory made Ned Skeen feel "hot."

"If he'd give Reel a good kicking, instead of showing him how to kick a football, it would serve him right," observed Brewster.

"That's what he ought to do," Skeen agreed.

"Yet, see that!"

Wilson poked his long nose in the direction of the fair grounds and pointed with one finger, as Jack held the pigskin for Reel.

"See that! That's more than he'd do for either one of us, even after we've stood by him all summer. He hasn't offered to show *me* any points about football."

"He thinks you don't need it, I suppose," said Ned.

"I don't know as I do," Wilson assented. "I was on the academy eleven last fall. But he wouldn't, if I did need it."

He was silent a moment, while all looked down into the fair grounds.

"But there's one thing I'm going to make a high old kick about, and don't you forget it!"

"What?" asked Skeen.

"When he tries to get that fellow into the gym and onto the eleven."

"He won't do that," Bill protested.

Wilson winked one big eye.

"That shows how much you know."

"But I say he won't!"

"Of course he won't!" Skeen added.

"Well, don't I know he will?"

"How do you know?"

"It came to me straight, this very morning."

Skeen stared at him with mouth open.

"You don't mean it?"

"That's just what I do."

"Oh, you're off!" grunted Bill.

"Am I? Well, you'll see!"

"Who told you?"

"It came to me as a secret; but I don't mind telling you that the fellow who told me had it straight from Reel's chum, Delancy Shelton."

"Don't believe it," Ned declared.

"All right; you just wait till the meeting."

"And that's to-night," said Bill.

"It is; and if you're down there you'll see some fun when Reel's name is proposed."

"I don't believe it!" Ned asserted again.

"What does *that* mean, then?"

Wilson pointed again toward the fair grounds.

"Oh, that's just Jack's way. He likes to teach fellows things like that, when they want to learn, and come to ask him to. I've known him give instructions like that to lots of fellows. He gave *you* instructions in baseball playing last spring."

Wilson reddened.

"That's not to the point."

"Well, it is to the point! He took you when you didn't know hardly anything about baseball and made you the player you are."

"But he had a reason for that," put in Bill Brewster. "Wilson stood for him against Phil Kirtland, that time the nine was organized, you know. That turned Kirtland against him, of course; and Jack felt that he owed it to Wilson to do all he could for him."

"Well, let that go," said Wilson, his face flushed, "and come down to this case. What does he want to help Reel Snodgrass for? Reel's done everything he could against him and all of us this summer."

"He met Jack's father, I'm told; and likely that's it," Ned answered.

"Yes, that's it," assented Bill.

"You're off!"

"What is it, then?"

"Well, have you fellows noticed the change in Jack lately?"

Ned and Bill stared.

"What change?" Skeen inquired.

"I haven't seen any!" Bill asserted.

"Well, you fellows *are* blind!"

"Well, what change?" Ned persisted.

"You've noticed that he's been more chummy with Phil lately?"

"He's come to know and like him better," Bill suggested.

"And he's been chummier with Brodie."

"Phil goes down to his house a good deal to see his sister," Skeen added. "And, of course, that would make them friendlier."

"Guess again."

"To tell you the truth, I haven't seen any change!" Bill declared.

"Well, he's changed, and it's been a big change; though it's been coming rather slowly—all summer, in fact."

"Name it."

"Reel's uncle used to be Jack's great friend and admirer. You know how he used to drive down to the

ball games in his shiny buggy, wearing his plug hat, and how he'd talk to Jack before the game began, and then cheer him whenever he made a good play. And you'll recollect, too, that after a while he went back on Jack."

"Yes, we know all that," Skeen admitted.

"Jack wants to get in again with the old man, and that's what's the matter with him now. You can't fool me!"

"Think so?" said Skeen, dubiously.

"Don't I know so?"

"Well, now, why should he particularly care to do that?"

"Money!"

"Money?" Skeen echoed.

"Sure thing! You remember that it was Snodgrass' money that helped you fellows to get hold of the gym building in the first place? Jack got it out of him. Now, if he could get money out of him for that, he could get money out of him for himself, if he stood on the good side of him, couldn't he?"

Skeen shook his head.

"I guess you're off!"

"Well, I'm not off in saying that Jack's going to try to get Reel into the gym and on the eleven; and if that isn't his reason for doing it you find a better one."

"I'll make a kick, myself, if he tries to put Reel on the eleven," said Skeen.

"Me, too," Bill seconded.

"I guess there'll be a lot of fellows make a kick!" Wilson prophesied.

CHAPTER II.

JACK AND REEL.

There were many things Jack Lightfoot could not do so well as some of his friends, as close readers of these stories have no doubt discovered.

He could not go the bottom of an intricate problem in mathematics as quickly as his cousin Tom; Bob Brewster could out-pull him in a tug-of-war; Lafe Lampton could distance him in throwing the hammer, and was a better catcher behind the bat; and Wilson Crane, whose speed was like that of an antelope, could out-run him on the cinder path.

But there was one thing which, above all others, made Jack the leader of the athletic young fellows of the high school and of Cranford, and that was his ability as an organizer and leader.

There was no one in Cranford, for instance, who could take a raw baseball nine and beat it into condi-

tion to win victories like Jack; no one who could take a green player and train him so quickly; nor was there anyone who could so well hold a nine together when it was composed of members who were naturally antagonistic to each other.

These things he had done the past summer, thereby proving his ability as a leader.

Though he sometimes distrusted himself and went into a regular blue funk, he was usually able to keep that to himself; and sometimes, when feeling the worst, he had contrived to inspire such high courage in his nine that his own pluck was raised by the mere enthusiasm of the others, which he himself had created.

These things have been, we think, pretty well disclosed already in the actions through which Jack and his associates have passed.

Readers of these stories may have thought Jack was out of the ordinary. He was, in this. But we may safely say that all leaders are out of the ordinary in this.

Not to compare Jack to Napoleon or Grant—for such a comparison would be laughable and ridiculous—but merely to illustrate—it may be said, surely, that neither of those great men could fire a gun or wield a sword better than, and probably not half so well as, many men in the ranks whom history has never heard of; but they were able to lead and inspire the men under them, and had the commander's ability to understand the weakness of the enemy as well as the strength of their own forces, and also the ability to use that knowledge.

Yet even they were sometimes defeated.

And Jack Lightfoot, clever as he was, seemed to be on the point of meeting his Waterloo now.

The trouble came about partly through Reel Snodgrass, who had been Jack's bitter enemy, but who was now striving to become his friend; and it came in part through a jealousy which arose in the hearts of Wilson Crane and some others, but chiefly Wilson.

Those who have read last week's number will recall that Reel Snodgrass, having been wrecked with Borlmo, the pretended Hindoo magician, in the South Pacific, had been cast with the magician on an island, where the two found Jack's father living, with the sailors and adventurers who had sailed with him from Alaska in search of certain pearl islands, which were reported to be fabulously rich in pearls and pearl shell.

Reel had nursed Jack's father during his sickness there, and had also scared away a shark that threatened John Lightfoot while he was in bathing; and because of that, and while feeling that perhaps he would never live to return to his home in Cranford, from which he

had been so long missing that his family feared he was dead, John Lightfoot wrote a letter which he gave to Reel.

After that Boralmo ran away with the boat which Lightfoot and his men were building, taking Reel with him, though Reel was horrified by the perfidy and base treachery of the act and would have prevented it if he could.

All these things had come at last to Jack's knowledge.*

Reel had, after much delay, for which he was not wholly to blame, given to Jack the letter which Jack's father had written in that far-away island.

One paragraph of John Lightfoot's letter to his family commended Reel to Jack's friendship.

That paragraph was as follows:

"If this boy lives to reach you with this message, will you reward him at least with kindness for what he has done for me? And I hope Jack will be his friend, for he will be a stranger in a strange land, in Cranford."

Though Reel had lied to Jack, the latter had discovered the truth after a while; and the fact that Reel had not approved of Boralmo's act in stealing the boat and leaving John Lightfoot and his companions in helplessness and hopeless despair on the island, together with that paragraph of the letter, still commended Reel to Jack, and made him willing to aid him in his ambition of becoming a football player and a general athlete.

Jack knew Reel well.

He had been given many opportunities to study his character; and he knew all the bad in Reel, as well as the good.

It would seem, sometimes, that not much good could be said of Reel Snodgrass.

Yet, as has already been maintained in these stories, no man, and no boy, is all good, or all bad.

There was good in Reel, even though at times it was pretty well covered up.

One good thing that may be mentioned now was that since Boralmo's departure from Cranford he had resolved to turn about and do better.

He had seen that he had been going wrong all summer, and that he had suffered because of it.

*For a full account of how this knowledge came to Jack, and the effect it had on him, the reader is referred to the story of last week, No. 36, "Jack Lightfoot's Pledge; or, Bound in Honor." It may be well here, also, to advise that all the stories of the series should be read. For, although each story is complete in itself, it is in effect a single chapter in a much larger story—the story of Jack's life in school, in sports and in the world of adventure. And that involves, likewise, the story of Jack's friends, his associates, his parents, and also his enemies. We believe you will find it interesting to follow every step that he takes; even though, as sometimes happens, some of those steps may seem to be backward.

He longed to take part in the sports and pastimes of the young fellows of Cranford, and to be like them; and he naturally turned to Jack, because Jack was the recognized leader, and also the most successful youth there when it came to drilling anyone for any sort of athletic work.

Reel had urged all this, and protested his desire for friendship, and had begged Jack to teach him what he could of football, and the other sports as they came along in their season.

This Jack was now trying to do.

It pleased his mother, he believed it would please his father if he could have known, and it pleased himself to be able to assist Reel; yet it did not please all of the young fellows who looked up to Jack for leadership.

On the day on which this story opens—a warm, bright day in autumn—Jack was down in the old fair grounds, near the new gridiron, talking to Reel and advising him. Reel had been tackling the "dummy," and now he was kicking an old football about, endeavoring to get the hang of the leg and foot movement necessary in good kicking.

Jack placed the ball for him several times and had him kick it over the bar.

Then Jack snapped the ball to him, and coached him in making an imaginary run with it.

There was plenty of work to do, for, in the beginning, Reel had known absolutely nothing about football, and now he gave every evidence of soon becoming a first-class player.

"They'll let me into the gym, you think?" he asked Jack, anxiously.

He had asked the same question many times, in that same way.

"I've told you I'd try to get you in," was Jack's answer, as before.

"But what if some of them make a kick?"

"I'll do the best I can for you."

"I can't ask any more than that, I reckon."

Yet he showed that he was still anxious, and referred to the subject more than once, as he continued his practice under Jack's careful instructions.

"I've made up my mind to do the square thing, hereafter, Lightfoot. And you may say that for me, if any of them raise an objection. I want to get on the eleven, you know."

Jack, recalling Reel's many acts of treachery, could not be sure how much of this might safely be believed; yet he was willing to give Reel the benefit of the doubt,

and to believe that he really meant to do the square thing from this on.

"Have you talked to any of the boys about it?" Reel inquired, as he lifted his toe for another kick, while Jack held the ball for him.

"No; only to Tom and Lafe."

"They're willing?"

"Tom is; Lafe didn't say much."

Plunk!

Reel lifted the ball with his toe, and then ran to get it.

"Lafe will do whatever you tell him to!" he declared, when he came back.

"Oh, I don't know about that," said Jack.

"I'm sure he will. But I'm afraid of some of the other fellows. You do all you can for me, Lightfoot?"

CHAPTER III.

WILSON GETS BUSY.

Wilson Crane had not revealed the real ground of his opposition to Jack, which was not Reel Snodgrass by any means.

He had been greatly angered a few days before, when, in a practice football game, Jack had laid him off for a persistent infraction of the rules.

And in another practice game, Jack had given him the position of center, or snapper-back, when Wilson had wanted to play half-back.

Wilson was feeling "sore," also, because he had not been consulted enough by Jack in various matters, and especially because he had not been praised as much as he thought he deserved.

His ability as a runner has been mentioned.

Wilson was, without doubt, the fastest runner in Cranford, as he had proved in the athletic meets, and in fielding and running during the baseball season.

Wilson was, also, a fair batter. In fact, he had played very good ball; though at the beginning of the season, when Jack took him in hand, he had not been at all promising.

A desire for recognition, and for praise, is all right in itself. But it never justifies us in forgetting benefits conferred.

And Wilson was apparently forgetting the things Jack had done for him.

He knew he was ungainly, and lacked altogether in good looks; but he knew he could run, and he wanted the fact duly recognized. Wilson did not think that Jack half appreciated his good qualities.

Yet there might have been no trouble at all, if Jack himself had been a little more conciliatory.

All summer Jack had made a point of telling different young fellows how fine their work was. But he was out of sorts one day when Wilson came round seeking praise, and sent this shot at him:

"Wilson, you're like some other fellows I know—you're always wanting somebody to brag about you!"

Then Wilson went into the air.

"Couldn't I say that of you, if I wanted to?" he snapped. "Don't you like to have people see your good plays and speak about them afterward? I've noticed that you do."

"Yes, of course, I do."

"Why do you say that about me, then?"

"Every one likes praise, of course," said Jack, sorry he had been too quick.

"And don't you rather think you're the whole circus, with all the little side shows thrown in?" Wilson went on, loudly and angrily.

Jack stared, then broke into a laugh.

"You're amusing, Wilson."

"Because of my long neck and long legs? Those legs are good enough to run with!"

"I didn't mean that," Jack urged; but Wilson went away in a rage.

After his talk with Bill Brewster and Ned Skeen, Wilson busied himself in seeing various young fellows who were members of the gym, or interested in the formation of the eleven which gossip said was to be organized to go against some league teams.

"We'll see if Jack Lightfoot's running everything!" was his thought.

One thing which Wilson held in mind, and spoke of, was that at the meeting that night officers for six months were to be elected.

It had been generally supposed that Jack would be put back as president of the club without opposition.

But Wilson began to tell himself now that he was not so sure of that. Perhaps some one else would be president—and his name might be Wilson Crane!

He meant to oppose Jack for president, and he meant to use Reel Snodgrass as much as he could as a lever with which to beat Jack.

The gym was crowded that night when Wilson arrived, and he was pleased to see so many of the fellows he had talked with there.

Reel Snodgrass had not ventured down. He was far too wise for that.

"Now, we'll see if Jack is running everything!" Wilson muttered, as he entered the room.

CHAPTER IV.

WILSON CRANE'S DEFIANCE.

Jack had not come yet.

The members of the gym, and others who were there but were not members, sat round talking, while a few amused themselves with the athletic devices.

When Jack came in he was accompanied by Lafe Lampton, and he looked disturbed and his face was pale.

He had but a little while before heard of what had been going on that day in the way of talk and threat.

He felt that it was a defiance, and he was preparing to meet it. He was especially angered against Wilson Crane.

Perhaps Jack made a mistake here. But the recollection of what he had done and tried to do for Wilson, coupled with Wilson's present attitude, was certainly enough to anger him.

If Wilson had come to him in a gentlemanly manner, bringing with him the others who objected to Reel, it would have been different, Jack felt. Instead, Wilson acted treacherously, and had attacked Jack in an underhanded way.

Lafe had heard all about it, and Lafe, of course, had told Jack all he knew.

"I don't know but you'd better drop Reel," Lafe had advised. "There's going to be a tremendous row."

Lafe did not like Reel himself.

"No!" said Jack, firmly.

"If it was me I'd drop it."

"And let Wilson Crane come into our gym as a new member and run it?"

"But he isn't alone," urged Lafe; "a lot of them don't like it. They'll vote you down."

"There's you, and Skeen, and Nat Kimball, and a good many others will stand with me."

"Skeen won't."

"I think he will."

"But he says he won't!"

When Jack entered the gym he observed the glances cast upon him.

Those who had been conversing with Wilson moved away from him; but they did not greet Jack cordially, and he could feel the trouble that was brewing.

"There's nothing like taking the bull by the horns," was his thought, and he walked over to Wilson.

"Is it true, Wilson," he asked, "that you've rallied a lot of fellows with the intention of voting me down to-night simply because I had suggested that Reel should be made a member?"

Wilson's rage flamed in his sharp, birdlike face.

"You're right," he cried, facing Jack, angrily. "We've decided that we won't have Reel Snodgrass in here, and that we don't want you any longer for president. There are a good many things we don't like about the way you've been running things."

His voice rose and his anger grew.

"We've stood it just about long enough, Lightfoot," he sneered. "And now some of us want a change in leader. See?"

Jack turned away, for he did not want to quarrel there with Wilson, a thing which Wilson rather seemed just then to desire.

"All right," he said, as he turned away; "whenever the club doesn't want me I'm ready to step down and out; but more fellows than you have got to speak up before I do it."

"To-night's the semi-annual meeting, you know!" Wilson shouted at him. "We think we'll elect a new president to-night."

"All right," said Jack; and he turned back to where Lafe was standing.

Jack was surprised, and he was hurt. Jack liked the friendship of those he had considered his friends, and he naturally liked some show of gratitude from those he had helped.

Jack's friends gathered round him, foremost among them reliable Lafe Lampton.

But Ned Skeen held off, and that did not please Jack.

Jack remembered that when Ben Birkett came to the town at the beginning of the previous school year Ned had deserted him for Birkett, being caught by Birkett's brilliancy and his show of money.

Since that time, however, Ned had been Jack's warm friend.

He did not know what had disgruntled Ned, and he did not feel inclined to inquire.

Jack's "mad" was fast getting up, and it had already been pretty well aroused by Wilson's insolence.

Looking over the room, where the members of the gym had broken into two groups, Jack saw that in Wilson's crowd were many of the new pupils who had come that year into the high school and had recently been made members of the gym. Among them were several who had not heretofore lived in Cranford, but whose parents had recently moved into the place.

What arguments Wilson had used to win them Jack did not know. He guessed that they were probably promises to put them upon the gym nine, if Wilson gained control.

With Wilson's crowd was Skeen, and Bill Brewster,

and one or two others on whom Jack had thought he could surely count.

The talk that floated to him from this crowd—Wilson's voice being especially loud—told Jack that in running the baseball nine he had made some serious mistakes. He heard himself accused of being "bossy," "overbearing," "thinking himself the whole thing," "bound to run everything," "hogging everything for himself," and other things equally unpleasant.

Most of these accusations came from Wilson, who, now that he had broken forth, seemed determined to go to the extreme limit of opposition.

Hearing these accusations, Jack wondered if he had been all, or any, of those things.

He had run the nine in a way to win ball games.

But when a captain does that he cannot please the notions of every individual player.

He is forced at times to "put his foot down." And he is sometimes forced to ask men to play positions they do not desire to play.

Jack discovered now, for the first time, that nearly every one of the members of the old nine who opposed him fancied himself a pitcher. Jack had stuck to the pitcher's box too closely to suit them. Wilson believed he could have pitched successfully; and so did Ned Skeen.

Nat Kimball came into the room now; and, to Jack's surprise, went over to Wilson's side.

Though Nat had generally stood up for Jack, he had been rather sore against him ever since Jack's trouble with Matsuki, the jiu-jitsu instructor, and now Wilson's arguments had won him.

Jack understood too, later, that Nat Kimball and Bill Brewster had not been entirely pleased during the ball season, because they had been given "no show."

They had been compelled to act the part of substitutes; and they had not been satisfied. They had wanted to be regular members of the nine. And they felt that in the football season now at hand they would again be merely substitute players, if Jack was captain. This was one of the strongest arguments Wilson had used with them.

Looking over Wilson's crowd again, Jack saw that nearly all, with the exception of those specifically named and the new members, had been substitutes in the baseball nine.

He turned to Lafe with a smile.

"I guess if I had pleased everybody that nine would have been about two dozen in number, and everyone would have been pitcher."

"Sure thing!" said Lafe, chewing calmly at an

apple while the tumult raged. "Every fellow in Cranford is a pitcher—in his mind."

Jack tried to laugh.

"I guess I'm the old pitcher that went to the well once too often. You've heard of it. It went to the well so often that at last it was broken."

"There'll be some heads broken here to-night!" Lafe grunted. But still he nibbled at his apple, and looked to be in anything but a fighting mood.

Glancing at his watch, and warned also by some cries from Wilson's crowd, Jack discovered that the hour for the meeting had arrived.

Many of his friends were not there, and Jack might have delayed the opening of the meeting, but he did not care to do that.

Other fellows began to come into the room—among them Brodie Strawn, Phil Kirtland, and a lot more from the academy.

There was to be a joint meeting of the members of the high-school gym and the academy gym here after the meeting of the high-school gym ended—this second meeting to be for the purpose of preparing for an eleven that could go into league games as the representatives of Cranford.

Brodie and Phil smiled when they saw what had happened and beheld the fighting attitude of those surrounding Wilson Crane.

"There'll be some fun here to-night!" said Phil. "Glad we came early; we'll get to see it."

CHAPTER V.

WILSON MEETS OPPOSITION.

The mere fact that he was a new member of the gym club might have taught Wilson Crane some modesty.

The previous school year he had attended the academy, and had been a member of the academy gym. But when the Cranford baseball nine was organized, of members taken from the academy and the high school, Wilson got into trouble with Phil Kirtland by favoring Jack against Phil.

Phil had made it somewhat unpleasant for him after that; and this year Wilson had entered the high school, and had been promptly made a member of the high-school gym.

Just as Jack was on the point of calling the meeting to order Jubal Marlin entered, carrying Polly, the mascot.

Polly showed that her heart was still in the right place, by yelling for "Jack Lightfoot!" and "Cranford!" as soon as she heard the tumult of voices.

Jubal took the parrot into the "office," as he called the railed space he occupied in one corner of the room; and there he put her in the big cage in which she was usually kept.

"Which side are you on?" said Wilson, coming to him there.

"Side o' what?" said Jubal.

"This is the night of the semi-annual meeting, you know."

"Yes, know 'tis. What yeou goin' tew dew?"

"We're going to run somebody against Jack for president."

Jubal stared and looked over the crowd, for the first time noticing the air of excitement.

"I want tew know! What's that fur?"

"We're tired of him; we want a change."

"Yeou be? Well, by gravy!"

"So, we're going to elect some one else."

Jubal wreathed his homely face in a smile.

"Who's goin' to be leader, if yeou put him aout?"

"We don't know yet; we'll get somebody. Will you stand with us?"

"Well, I ain't tired of him yit. He's pleased me all right. Who ye gointer git tew win the games, if he don't lead?"

"He doesn't win the games—the team does that! We'd win just the same if he wasn't captain."

"I want tew know!"

"And the first thing is to put in a new president of the gym club."

"Who's leadin' this oppersition?"

"I am."

"Yeou be? Well, gosh all hemlock! I'm reckonin' that yeour side is gittin' hard up fer a leader."

Wilson's face flamed.

"You won't help us?"

"Nit. Not agin' Jack Lightfoot. He's the best friend I ever had, er want. An' yeou ought tew be ashamed o' yerself, seems tew me. Seems tew me there's several things yeou've got a call to remember. I reckon yeou've forgot the hull of them. Well, I ain't!"

"Better stand in with us," Wilson whispered, urging his point. "We're going to win out in this fight. We've got the votes here to-night to do it with. A good many of Jack's friends ain't here. And we're going to organize the high-school eleven. If you want to be on that eleven you'd better stand in with us; for if you don't stand with us we'll cut you out when we organize."

"Yeou ain't org'nized it yit, and I cal'late yeou ain't a-gointer."

The fight opened up shortly after that, and almost as soon as Jack rapped with the gavel for order.

Jack had the minutes of the previous meeting read; and then announced that this was the semi-annual meeting, when new officers of the club were to be chosen.

"How's this choosing to be?" Wilson asked, getting on his long legs.

"If only one candidate is nominated, by calling the ayes and noes; if more are nominated, by ballot."

"Well, there's to be more than one candidate to-night."

"Then it will be by ballot."

"Very well," said Wilson. "That's what we wanted to know."

Ned Skeen popped to his feet. His face grew red as he looked Jack in the eye.

"Mr. President. May I ask if nominations are now in order?" he piped.

"Nominations for the office of president for the next six months are now in order," Jack announced.

"Then, Mr. President"—Ned coughed and hesitated—"I place in nomination the name of Wilson Crane."

One of Wilson's backers cheered, and there was a loud clapping of hands.

Lafe climbed lazily to his feet, holding a peanut in his fingers.

"Mr. President!"—he slowly cracked the peanut open—"I want to propose the name of one, sir, who has led the members of this club to victory on more than one hard-fought baseball field, and who, if he is made captain of a league eleven, will lead Cranford to victory on the gridiron this fall. I want to propose the name of the cleanest, whitest, bravest and finest young athlete to-day in Cranford, barring none, for president of the high-school gym. Mr. President, and fellow members of the club"—he faced round and looked at the members—"I am proud, to-night, to put in nomination the name of Jack Lightfoot, my friend, and as true a friend as any fellow ever had."

Jubal yelled like an Indian, and leaped to his feet.

Jubal's yell brought a piping cheer from inside the cage in the "office," where Polly called out in her croaking way:

"Hurrah for Jack Lightfoot!"

Jubal's face, flaming with enthusiasm, cracked open in a grin.

"Polly, God bless her! She knows a good thing when she sees it; and in that has got more sense than

some humans I could name. I ain't a speaker, like what my friend Lafe Lampton is, but I want tew second that motion he made jist now. And I say: 'Hoop-la' Jack Lightfoot naow an' ferever, world without end.' He's the boy fer me."

Jack smiled at Jubal's enthusiasm; but it pleased him. Who is not pleased to have a loyal friend?

Wilson Crane had already "counted noses," and was sure that more than half the votes there would be cast against Jack. He had asked them to come early, and hoped to put his plans through before Jack's friends could rally. As has been said, some of Jack's friends were not present. They had not known there was to be a fight for president that night, for Wilson had worked slyly, and therefore they had not made it a point to come. On the other hand, Wilson had quietly summoned every member of the opposition.

Lafe stepped over to Jubal now and whispered something to him.

Jubal nodded; and then, rising, said something about going to see if the parrot was all right.

In another second he had his head out of the upper window there, and was sending his "coo-ee" call ringing up the street.

That "coo-ee" call was used by the boys of Cranford when they were in need of help. Lafe and Jubal knew that just then Jack Lightfoot was in need of help, and Jubal was sure some boys were on the corner above, for he had seen them when he came down.

Wilson was on his feet, protesting against this, when Jubal came back.

"Mr. President," he said, his voice harsh and excited, "this meeting has been called to order, and it is most decidedly out of order for anyone to disturb the meeting by calling in that way from the windows. I think the member deserves a vote of censure."

"Why don't ye say deserves a lickin'?" Jubal whispered, as he dropped into his seat.

Wilson had not sat down.

"As the nominations have been made, I ask now that the votes be taken at once."

Lafe rose to his feet again, munching his peanut.

"Mr. President."

"There is no motion before the house," said Jack; "and none is in order. Nominations have been made for president of this club. I am simply waiting to see if any other names are to be proposed."

"None are, I think," said Wilson, "and voting is in order."

He was in a nervous haste, for he feared the effect of those coo-ee calls.

"Do I hear any other names mentioned for president?" Jack asked.

Lafe winked to one of his friends, Bob Brewster, Bill's brother, who had told him he was for Jack, first, last and all the time.

In another second that youngster was on his feet.

"Mr. President," he said, "I have the honor of putting in nomination the name of the best-hearted, young fellow in this town. I may say in his favor that he is the best baseball catcher in Cranford, that he is a fellow who never goes back on a friend, and that when it comes to eating he can put down and keep down more than any other six fellows here. When the apple season is on it is apples; when the peanut season rages it it peanuts; when pie time comes, no housewife in the town can cook enough pies for him; and, moreover, he is healthy and hearty, and smiling all the time. Which is the best advertisement possible, that eating is good for the system and good for the digestion; that pies are good all the time, apples good whenever they can be had, and peanuts when you've a nickel in your jeans to spare."

For two minutes this speech was continued, and the name of Lafe Lampton was mentioned at the end of it; though everyone knew almost from the start that Lafe was the "wonder" referred to.

Another young fellow, catching the idea, jumped up and put in nomination Jubal Marlin, with a speech that was quite as long.

CHAPTER VI.

WILSON'S DEFEAT.

All the time Wilson sat stewing in his seat.

"Is this fair?" he asked, speaking to Jack. "I ask you, as president of this club, if this is fair? This is a mere device to kill time."

Steps were heard on the stairs and some members began to come in, to Wilson's disgust.

Jack rose in his place.

"I call Mr. Wilson Crane to the chair, to take my place, which he thinks I am not filling properly."

Wilson looked confused.

"Oh, I don't want the position!"

"Please take the chair," said Jack, vacating it; and Wilson, taking a second thought, and wondering if it would not put him in a position where he could have Jack more at a disadvantage, took the chair which Jack vacated, and caught up the gavel.

"Nominations for president having been made, we will now begin——"

Lafe got on his feet, chewing slowly.

"Mr. President," he interrupted, "though I have named Jack Lightfoot, there is another fellow here whom I want to nominate, and that is Bob Brewster."

Thereupon Lafe made a speech in favor of Bob Brewster, and Bob was cheered loudly by Jack's adherents.

Wilson brought the gavel down with a thump as Lafe sat down.

"This killing of time in this way has got to stop!" he shouted.

More members were coming upstairs, in answer to Jubal's coo-ee call.

Wilson saw that if he did not hurry things the fellows who were willing to back him would soon be in a minority by reason of these late comers.

"Nominations having been made," he began; but Jack cut him short.

"There is nothing said in our constitution and by-laws limiting the number of nominations that may be made for the office of president," Jack urged; "nor is there anything limiting the time of the nominating speeches. Therefore, being now but a private member, but with the privileges of the floor, I beg leave to put another name in nomination."

Wilson saw now that in accepting the chair he had rather tied his own hands. The laws of the club permitted certain things, and he could no more shut off the nominations than Jack could; though he had blamed Jack for not doing it.

"This is just a time-killing scheme!" he cried.

He rose to argue this, but saw that if he did so he would be killing time himself, and giving a chance for more members to arrive; so he sat down even quicker than he had got on his feet; and he looked almost helpless when Jack rose again to put a name in nomination and to make a speech supporting it.

Wilson felt the sweat coming out all over his body, as Jack went on with his speech and more members came up the stairs into the room.

He hardly heard what Jack was saying, for he began to count "noses" again, and to estimate what his chances were.

When he had made his count he brought the gavel down with a crash.

"You've spoken too long, Lightfoot!" he declared.

Jack looked at him with a smile.

"If I have done so, it is because I am ignorant of any law that limits the nominating speeches. I do not think I have spoken beyond the time limit."

"Sit down!" Wilson bellowed, angry and red in the face.

"Mr. President," said Jack, still smiling, "I protest against the ruling."

"You're out of order!" Wilson howled, not knowing what else to do.

Jack turned with a smile to the excited young fellows in the room.

"I appeal from the ruling of the chair to the house," he said.

Wilson was not as well up in the laws which govern societies of this kind as Jack was; and when Jack insisted that he had a right to make such an appeal, Wilson was forced to hunt through the by-laws, and through the manual the club used, to settle this point.

More members came in while Wilson was making this frenzied search.

Then Wilson found that Jack was right, and that when an appeal of this kind was taken from the decision of the chair to the house, the chairman had to put it.

Wilson put the appeal; and while he was putting it and getting the vote on it, more members came in, in answer to that coo-ee call.

Wilson's friends had still a majority, and they voted against Jack on the appeal, thus sustaining Wilson.

But time had been consumed, to Wilson's disgust.

More boys came trooping into the room.

"Get your ballots ready and begin the voting," Wilson ordered, furious now, for he saw that Jack and Lafe and the others were bent on tangling him up in parliamentary usage and thus gaining enough time to accomplish his defeat.

Jack again rose to his feet.

"Mr. President."

"You're out of order!" screamed Wilson, banging the desk with the gavel.

Jack sat down.

"Get ready for your voting," said Wilson.

Jack again rose to his feet.

"You're out of order!" Wilson screamed at him.

"May I ask a question?" Jack inquired, smoothly, and with a smile that made Wilson want to choke him.

"Ask it?" Wilson snapped.

"Who is to take up the ballots?"

"Oh, yes—er—I forgot that; we've got to have some one to take up the ballots."

"And some tellers to count them," Jack added.

"Yes; and some tellers to count them."

Wilson stood up, trembling, looking over the room.

"You, Kimball, and Brewster, I appoint to collect

the ballots and distribute paper for the ballots to be written on."

"Which Brewster?" asked Lafe, grinning.

"Bill Brewster!" shouted Wilson.

"And I appoint Ned Skeen, Arlo Kilfoyle and Jerry Watson, to act as tellers."

Lafe was on his feet again.

"We protest against that."

"Why?" Wilson shouted, in a rage.

"We've a right to have some tellers who favor our side."

Wilson laughed.

"Your side? Which is your side?"

"Jack Lightfoot's."

"Do I have to appoint friends of every fellow nominated?"

Wilson laughed loud and harshly, for he saw he had caught Lafe that time.

Lafe tried to argue the thing, but Wilson shut him off.

Still, Lafe had gained a little time; and other fellows had come in, among them some of Jack's friends.

The gym was packed to suffocation when the voting began, which was not for five minutes later, for Lafe and Jack were good obstructionists and found various ways of killing time and slowing the thing that Wilson was so wild to hurry.

Wilson began to find that he had lost a point by taking the chair; and that, really, being chairman of a meeting, which is by virtue of the office a non-partisan place, is not the position one should choose who desires to carry a measure through. Yet, if Wilson had been better versed in parliamentary law, he might have favored his side much more than he had been able to.

This was a small battle, in a boys' club, but I may say to my readers that it gives something of a hint of the way matters are carried on in our State legislatures and in the national Congress.

Here but a few minutes—about half an hour—was consumed by time-killing devices. In the national Congress, days, and weeks, are sometimes eaten up in that way, by men who wish to defeat some measure or gain some advantage.

Wilson was in a fever of impatience as the ballots were collected, and when the counting began.

A good many of the young fellows who had come in in answer to Jubal's coo-ee call he had not seen and did not know how they would vote; some of them he knew to be Jack's staunchest friends.

"If I could have put the thing through promptly, as I planned to!" he grumbled to himself

Wilson, as chairman, seemed to have lost control of the meeting, and the gym was now in a tumult, with everyone talking.

Then the count of the votes attracted attention and began to still the uproar of voices.

Wilson's heart grew warmer; for at first the count of votes ran in his favor.

But when the result was announced his face paled, while his heart gave a wild flutter of defeat.

"Beaten!" he groaned, inwardly, "and that means that I'm not to be on the eleven!"

He pulled his courage together.

"But I'm not beaten yet! No, there's more time; and other things can be done."

The vote was overwhelmingly in favor of Jack; for but two names had been voted for—Wilson's and Jack's; those other names put in nomination received not a single vote, and it was not expected that they would when they were proposed. That had been merely Lafe's device for killing time.

When Jack's reelection was announced, Jubal sprang to his feet, swinging his hand round his head.

"Hip, hip, hoop-la! Three cheers for Jack Lightfoot, the new president of the gym club. Naow, altogether—everybody!"

It was a wild cheer that rose from Jack's adherents, as they climbed to their feet and yelled over their victory.

"Wilson," said Lafe, stepping up to him, when the gym meeting had adjourned, after all the other officers had been elected, "I want to say to you that that was a low-down, dirty trick! But we beat you, old boy, at your own game. Maybe you'll conclude, after this, that Jack Lightfoot has got a few friends left."

One thing, however, Jack had not done.

He had not presented the name of Reel Snodgrass to the gym club.

Seeing how great would be the opposition, he had held back the name, intending to sound the boys on the subject. He wished to help Reel, but he did not desire to thrust Reel into the club if the other fellows did not want him there.

CHAPTER VII.

PRELIMINARY STEPS.

Wilson Crane did not remain to attend the joint meeting of the members of the high school and the academy gyms, which took place immediately after the adjournment of the first meeting; but hastened away, his face flaming.

He had been defeated, as Lafe had said, at his own game; but he was not willing to have it go so, and he wanted time to think up some other idea.

He believed he had found another scheme, almost before he was downstairs. The gym meeting had been adjourned, on the motion of Lafe, to meet again at eight o'clock, on Saturday. This was Thursday night.

"That's it!" he said, snapping his fingers, as he thrust his long nose through the doorway and plunged out into the night. "That's the very ticket!"

What this "very ticket" was the reader will discover in due time.

As soon as the combined meetings had been called to order, Jack rose and drew a letter from his pocket.

Phil Kirtland now occupied the chair. Phil was president of the academy gym; and Lafe, as an evidence of good will, had moved that he be made chairman of the combined meeting, a motion which Jack seconded.

"I've already shown this to you, Mr. Chairman," said Jack, speaking to Phil, "and some others know about it; but I believe it's not yet generally known. So, I ask that the secretary read it."

A temporary secretary had been chosen; and he read the letter which Jack placed in his hands:

"MR. JACK LIGHTFOOT, CRANFORD.

"DEAR SIR: We have organized an eleven here, and would be glad to meet an eleven from Cranford, either at this place or Cranford, at the earliest time convenient. I am sending this to you because I do not know if you have organized an eleven for the fall gridiron season. Hoping if you are not the right man for this, you will give it to the captain of your eleven, I am,

"Yours truly, KID CASEY."

This letter was from Tidewater, and Kid Casey had been the pitcher of the Tidewater Tigers in the baseball season just gone by, when he was known as "The Wizard Pitcher of the Four-Town League."

Phil rose in his place, when the letter had been read.

He was dressed neatly, and was a clean-looking, handsome young fellow.

"You have heard the reading of the letter from Tidewater," he said. "What will you do with it?"

Tom Lightfoot rose in his place.

"Mr. Chairman, I move you that it be laid on the table until after we have settled the question of what we're going to do about an eleven. Just now, we haven't a Cranford eleven, and so aren't in a position to give an answer to this challenge."

Bob Brewster seconded Tom's motion; and it being

put by Phil, it was carried, and consideration of the Tidewater challenge was put aside for the time.

But its reading had excited much whispered comment.

Lafe got on his sturdy legs.

"Now, Mr. Chairman, I move that a committee of three be chosen who shall have power to form an eleven out of whatever they may consider the very best football material we have in this town."

"Second the motion," said Tom, rising.

"You've heard the motion," said Phil, after re-stating it. "Are there any who wish to discuss it?"

A dozen fellows were on their feet almost at once; but Phil recognized Brodie, as having been the first one up.

Brodie was dressed as neatly as Phil; and he, too, was a clean-looking fellow, though he was not as handsome as Phil, for his face was darker and heavier, and had something of surly look about it.

But everybody knew that when it came to football Brodie Strawn was "all there."

Brodie's speech was not strictly to the point, and he might have been called to order because of that, if Phil or anyone else had chosen so to do.

It was largely a rehearsal of some of the experiences with Tidewater and other towns the past season on the diamond; with a statement that if Cranford went against any of these towns in football, he should like some assurance that they would meet fair treatment and fair play.

"Who's to have the appointment of this committee?" Phil asked, after several had followed Brodie with short "remarks."

"I'm willing that the chairman should appoint it," said Jack.

But Phil did not want to appoint the committee, for he wanted to be on it himself, and he could hardly, with any consistency, choose himself.

"I'd rather some names should be suggested," he urged.

Thereupon Jack named the chairman, Phil Kirtland; Lafe named Jack, and Bob Brewster named Tom Lightfoot.

The meeting voted unanimous confirmation of this selection; and was then ready to adjourn, having accomplished its purpose, after instructing the secretary to inform Tidewater of the action taken.

When Wilson Crane heard of this, which he did the next morning, from Ned Skeen, he was disturbed again.

"That puts me out of the eleven from Cranford!" he

said, speaking slowly. "Phil's dead against me, Brodie always goes with Phil, and, of course, Jack will turn me down for what I did last night."

"And I'm afraid me, too," said Skeen, his manner nervous. "I guess we'd oughtn't to have gone into that thing against Jack. You can't down him. He's got too many friends."

"If I could have worked that scheme, we'd have downed him all right; but that coo-ee call did us up. It brought a lot of Jack's friends running."

He seemed to feel that he had been badly used, forgetting, apparently, that he had tried to trick Jack's friends by having the whole opposition meet early and put through their measures without the knowledge of Jack's friends.

"But I'll defeat him yet!" he boasted, angrily.

"How're you going to do it?"

"I'll tell you soon. But you'll see that I'll defeat him yet."

CHAPTER VIII.

WITH THE "GANG" AGAIN.

Wilson had concealed from Skeen something of the great rage that shook him, and some things that had happened after the adjournment of the joint meeting.

You have perhaps observed that whenever anyone undertakes to do a certain thing and gets on the wrong path, that it is easier to keep there than it is to turn about and manfully confess the wrong and submit to the consequences of defeat.

Wilson Crane was, like Skeen, almost sorry that he had entered into that combination against Jack. But now that he had started into the thing he was determined to carry it through at all hazards.

There had been a time, not so very long before, when Wilson had run with a crowd of boys in the town who were known as the "Gang."

Jubal and Wilson had both belonged to the "Gang," of which Nick Flint was the recognized leader and Bat Arnold a shining light.

In his rage Wilson went in search of Bat Arnold, when the gym meeting was over. He was at that time still turning over the plan he had formed, in which, as he knew, Bat could not help him; nevertheless, his evil genius, having again taken the reins, drove him to Bat; for he knew that Bat hated Jack, and perhaps could suggest something, for Bat was clever, as well as unscrupulous.

When he reached Bat's house he found Nick Flint there.

"Hello!" said Wilson, in the old way, as the boys

came out to the gate to talk with him, in answer to his call.

Nick's malicious grin could be seen by the light from the street lamp.

"Thought you'd cut our acquaintance," he said, almost with a sneer, "since you've been running with Lightfoot's crowd!"

Wilson said something ugly.

It was good form with these fellows to swear.

Nick grinned again.

"Say, if you go at that, the sulphur fire will scorch off those little angel wings you've been sprouting lately!"

"Cut it out!" cried Wilson, with another oath. "Jack and I don't mix any longer."

Nick's dark, Apache face took on added interest.

"When'd that happen?"

They began to walk away from the gate together.

"Oh, it's been coming for some time. A fellow can't get along with him unless he's willing that Jack should run everything. I'm tired of it."

"You was singin' a different kind of song last summer, when you was runnin' round with his ball team," Bat reminded, unpleasantly. "Then Jackie Lightfoot was it."

"Well, I'm finding him out!"

"And when you was doin' that," Bat went on, "you cut us completely; we wasn't good enough fer you any longer."

"Forget it!" said Wilson, slangily, trying to be amiable. "I didn't go back on you fellows, though."

"Well, you kept away from us!"

"I had to do that. You'd been in trouble with Jack and some of the others, and I had to keep away from you if I stayed on the nine."

"Oh, that's all right," said Nick, in a conciliating tone. "Wilson's all right, Bat. The thing that troubled me most was that while the ball season lasted and he was trying to be good enough for Jack's crowd we didn't get any good old red eye."

He winked significantly.

"We can have some to-night," said Wilson, eagerly. "Come along!"

He led the way in the direction of his father's office, where, as he knew, supplies of liquor for medicinal purposes were kept, as well as medicines; for Dr. Crane, like many practitioners in small places, preferred to furnish these things to his patients, many of whom lived long distances in the country and could not easily get into town to the drug stores.

Many times in the past Wilson had slipped into his

father's office and stolen out a bottle of first-class old rye, or some other brand of whisky, and shared it with the members of the Gang.

But he had not thought of it until Nick Flint made his evil suggestion. Nick had not only an Indian-like face, but an Indian-like love of firewater.

When they reached Dr. Crane's office they found the front door not only unlocked, but ajar. But no light was burning in the office.

"In there, pa?" Wilson asked, cautiously.

"He's out, and he's left the door unlocked!" he announced, joyously, when there was no reply. "Nobody's here, and we'll help ourselves."

Forthwith he pushed the door open and entered, with Nick and Bat at his heels.

But the office was not empty, as he had thought; for in the very room into which they first entered sat a young fellow, in a chair by the window.

This was Reel Snodgrass, who had come to the office a few moments before to see Dr. Crane about some trifling ailment, that was perhaps more imaginary than real, and finding the door unlocked, had stepped inside to wait a few minutes for the doctor's return.

He had taken the chair by the window in the darkness, and had been sitting there when Wilson arrived outside.

As Reel knew that Wilson was the one who that day had been stirring up talk against him, he did not care to meet him, though the meeting seemed inevitable. However, when Wilson came in, with Bat and Nick at his heels, Reel sat still in the chair, and breathed with relief as they passed on into the back room without observing him.

When they began to talk in the back room, Reel Snodgrass tiptoed softly to the door and stepped outside.

In a few moments, and just as Reel was thinking of leaving, they came out.

Wilson had secured a bottle of whisky.

Reel retreated around the corner of the office, for he did not care to be seen by these fellows making an apparently cowardly flight up the street.

He heard the cork drawn from the bottle, and the scent of the liquor came to him.

"Sample it, Nick; you're a judge of good whisky,"

he heard Wilson say; and then heard, a moment later, Nick smack his lips with gusto.

"Great!" said Nick. "That's the stuff! Gee! I think I'd like to live in a doctor's office! Couldn't git me the job here of office boy, could you?"

He handed the bottle to Bat.

"Try it; it's great!"

Bat held up the bottle, and Reel could see his uplifted arm.

"Jack Lightfoot!" he said, as a sentiment, "may the devil take him!"

Wilson laughed mirthlessly.

"You can't hurt my feelings by saying that—not now! I'm through with him. But hard words don't hurt a fellow."

"Hard knocks might," said Bat, significantly, still holding up the bottle. "Here's hopin' that he'll get what he deserves!"

Then Wilson drank, after Bat; but he offered no sentiment.

"If you fellows could hammer that fellow I'd like it, all right," he said, though he had not planned for anything of the kind.

Nick's face shone strangely.

"You're really out with him?"

"Sure thing! I'm out with him!"

"And to-morrow you'll be in with him again!"

"I'll bet you I don't. We had a regular old war to-night at the gym," said Wilson, sturdily, endeavoring to crush down his conscience.

Nick heard this with interest. For several reasons, not the least of which was the whisky, he wanted to get Wilson back into the Gang. Nick was shrewd and daring, otherwise he would not have been the leader of his crowd. Now his mind worked quickly.

"Tell you what," he said; "if you'll hop in there and get us another bottle of this baby's milk, to put our courage up, Bat and I will lay for that fellow to-night, and do him up for you."

"Oh, I don't want you to do that!" said Wilson.

"Well, when I want to get even with a fellow I lay for him, and pound the wadding out of him."

"I wouldn't care for that. You'd get me mixed up in it, and that would make a high old row."

"Well, you bring out another bottle and we'll do things to-night!"

"What will you do?"

The stiff drink Wilson had taken was already beginning to fire his brain and make him reckless.

"We'll lay for him, as he comes home from that meeting. You said there's another meeting going on. We'll trip him with a rope, or something, and then we'll give it to him good."

"Oh, I don't care to have you do that!"

But he did not say it as strongly as before.

"That meeting will be out soon," hinted Nick.

"He'd whip both of you!"

"Oh, would he?" sneered Bat.

"He has done that, already."

"Under different circumstances."

"He can do it under any circumstances."

"Do we get the whisky?" Nick asked. "That's the question."

"Oh, I'll get you the whisky, just because I want to treat you right; though, if I take too many bottles, the old man will tumble, and the office will be locked tight as a bank after this."

"Just one bottle more," Nick urged.

Wilson sprang into the office, and, coming back with the whisky, slipped it into Nick's hands.

"We'd better move along," he said. "The doctor may show up any minute. I oughtn't to have taken more than one bottle."

They began to walk away.

"But you fellows won't dare to do what you said?" he continued. "Jack would simply put it all over you, if you should tackle him. You wouldn't be able to walk for a week."

"Come down there somewhere and hide and see us drink up this stuff and get in shape for him."

The words of the speakers died away, so that Reel Snodgrass could not hear them longer.

"Back to the Gang again," mused Reel. "This is a funny world! Just when I've been thinking it would pay me to turn over a new leaf and stand in with Jack. here's a fellow who thinks he'd like to go the other way. Jack downed him at the gym to-night, all right.

That's proof of it; and I'll bet they had a hot old time. I wish I could have been there."

Reel was about to step back into the office, when he took another thought.

"The way to stand in with a fellow, is to show him that you'll help him! Yes, that's right. I'll have to hunt Lightfoot up and tell him about this. I can see Dr. Crane some other time."

Then he, too, left the office.

"I hope the doctor won't learn that I've been here and think I took his whisky. Well, if he does, and says anything to me about it, I'll expose that hopeful long-shanks of his. Wilson's done me dirt to-day, and I'm not going to forget it."

So, he was just in the mood to tell Jack Lightfoot, and turn the tables, if possible, against Wilson.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BITER BIT.

Having made up his mind, Reel Snodgrass hurried rapidly in the direction of the gym.

The joint meeting had adjourned sooner than Wilson Crane thought it would, and Jack was on his way home, accompanied by Tom, Lafe and some other friends.

Reel saw them stop for a little talk on the corner above Jack's house.

"Hello!" he called, as Jack left his friends and turned homeward down the side street.

Jack stopped, though he would have preferred just then to meet almost anyone else.

"I've been waiting to speak with you," Reel explained.

"Yes?" said Jack, though he thought he knew what was coming.

And it did come, as the first thing.

"What luck?" Reel asked.

"I've got to confess, Reel, that I didn't propose you for membership to-night."

"No?"

There was disappointment in Reel's tone.

"I saw it wouldn't do—to-night, anyway. Wilson Crane and some others had been making a good deal of talk, and I was afraid if I presented your name you

would be blackballed. I didn't want that to happen, of course, if I could help it."

"No, certainly not."

"So I thought I'd postpone the thing, and have a little private talk with some of the members of the club. I haven't given the thing up, though, frankly, it begins to look as if I'll have to. A lot of the fellows don't want you in the gym."

"And Wilson Crane's leading them?"

"Well, yes, I guess he is. He was pretty loud to-night."

"Yet you beat him!"

"So, you've heard that already?"

Jack laughed.

"Yes, we rather did him up, I think. Who told you?"

"Let's go over that way, out of the range of this light," Reel suggested; "for he's sent some fellows down here to beat you to a pulp. They may be hiding somewhere near here now for all I know, though I walked pretty fast. I don't think they're here yet. I guess he didn't know the meeting would adjourn so early."

He led the way, accompanied by Jack, who was greatly puzzled, and not a little disappointed in Wilson.

"Now, I'll tell you what I heard. Sit down here on the grass. It's dark here, and we can't be seen."

They sat down, and in low tones he told all he knew.

Jack did not laugh now.

"That's too bad!" he said.

"You ain't afraid of them?"

"No; I wasn't thinking of that; but I hate to see a fellow like Wilson go back to that crowd of young toughs."

"He's no good!"

"Yes, I think he is. There's a lot of good in him."

"But he's turned against you!"

"There's a lot of good in him, just the same."

"You wouldn't tell his father about the stolen whisky?"

"No. That's not my affair. Dr. Crane ought to keep his wits about him and lock his office when he leaves it. I wasn't thinking of that."

"I thought maybe you'd want to lay for Nick and Bat and give them what Paddy gave the drum. They need it."

"We'll see what happens. I don't have to go home just yet. They may not come down here at all. They may have said that just to get that second bottle of whisky."

He lay back on the grass with Reel.

"I hope you won't give up trying to get me into the gym," Reel urged. "I want to get on the high-school eleven, and I'll have to be a member of the gym club to do that, you know. It's the eleven I want to make, you know."

He had told that to Jack scores of times.

"I've said I'll do what I can," Jack promised again.

"But you seem to have weakened to-night."

"Well, those fellows, a lot of them, don't like you, and that's a fact. But I'll do what I can. I'll have private talks with some of them. But I don't want to spring your name on the club just to have you blackballed."

"No, of course not; but you can do about anything you want to with that club."

Jack laughed silently.

"You wouldn't say that, if you'd been at the meeting to-night. I wanted to be reelected president, and I came near being defeated by Wilson. So, you see, you're mistaken if you fancy that I run things there."

"But you beat him!"

"By a close shave, yes; but there were enough votes against me to keep you from becoming a member, if they were turned against you."

"Well, if I can't get into the gym I'll leave the high school!" Reel snapped, angrily.

"Sh!" said Jack, touching him on the arm. "Here they come—two fellows, anyway."

It was Nick and Bat.

Jack and Reel watched them as they sneaked down the side street and disappeared in the dark alley.

"They'll lie there a long time before they catch me," Jack whispered. "But they wouldn't have got me, anyhow; for I'd have been at home, if we hadn't stopped here."

"You can't get into the house without them seeing you."

"Oh, I'm not going in yet."

He lifted his head cautiously, and then saw the two young fellows stretch a rope across the sidewalk.

After that they burrowed out of sight somewhere.

Pretty soon a man came down the side street, on his way home.

"He'll trip over that rope," Reel whispered.

But he did not, for the boys in hiding let it lie, and he did not even see it.

Several men came along, homeward bound, and there was no sight of the boys in hiding.

"It would serve them right if they were left to lie there until they wore their patience out," said Jack.

"You might slip over there and be right on their backs before they knew you were around," Reel suggested.

"It would serve 'em right," Jack agreed.

But he did not move.

Soon he saw another form coming down the sidewalk.

"Wilson Crane!" he whispered.

Wilson had been unable to resist the temptation to come down and see what would happen, or had happened.

He was making for the alley where he knew Nick and Bat would hide; and as he slipped along he drew his long, birdlike neck down into his upturned collar and bent his knees, for he did not want any chance observer to recognize him and afterward suspect him.

It was an unfortunate performance for Wilson.

Bat Arnold and Nick Flint had imbibed so much from those bottles by this time that, while they felt brave as lions, they were not in a discriminating mood; and from their position they had not been able to see Wilson when he first appeared on the side street.

Hence, when Wilson came to the stretched rope, which he did not observe in the darkness, it was jerked suddenly, shooting his legs from under him and throwing him sprawling.

The whisky-filled eyes of Nick and Bat had mistaken Wilson's bunched-up ungainliness for Jack Light-foot, and they had tripped him, just as they had meant

to trip Jack; and now they pounced out upon him, before he could rise.

As Wilson struggled to get on his feet, feeling stunned by the sudden and heavy fall, Bat swung a right-hander that knocked Wilson half off the sidewalk.

Then Nick kicked him heavily, poking the toe of his shoe painfully into Wilson's side.

Reel and Jack were staring, for they had recognized Wilson further up, when he was under the street light, and this was, therefore, a most astonishing thing.

Wilson shouted thickly and tried again to rise.

But the two young ruffians, still blinded by whisky and in an indiscriminating mood, assaulted him violently, kicking and striking.

Jack sprang to his feet.

"We've got to stop that!" he said.

And he ran toward Wilson, who was bellowing with rage and pain now, while Bat and Nick were still kicking and striking him.

Jack's leaps were like those of a panther, and before the young villains could turn and run he was in their midst, laying about him.

Reel had followed, but remained out in the darkness.

One blow of Jack's ironlike fist flung Bat Arnold up against the paling fence, and another knocked Nick Flint out into the gutter.

Nick leaped up, wet and draggled, and fled up the street.

Bat would have done the same, if Jack had not caught him by the collar and jerked him out into the middle of the sidewalk.

"Explain this!" he said, in a furious tone. "You young coward, you ought to have your head beaten off!"

Jack half guessed the truth, yet he was angered, and he did not hesitate to show it.

Wilson by this time was on his feet, yet nearly breathless, with his clothing torn and blood on his face. He was panting with excitement.

"What does this mean, Wilson?" Jack demanded; though he knew well enough why Wilson and Bat were there.

"I—I don't know," said Wilson, stammering.

"You're a liar!" Bat howled at him, angered by the

discovery of his mistake and by that blow given him by Jack; and he had some dim feeling that Wilson had tricked him.

"Well, what did you jump on *me* for?" Wilson demanded, incautiously.

"We thought it was——"

He stopped.

"Out with it," said Jack, shaking him by the collar. "Who did you think it was?"

By this time Wilson looked as if he wished he could creep away.

"Who did you think it was?"

Jack lifted his hard fist and seemed about to drive it into Bat's ugly face.

"We—we—we thought——"

"Yes; who did you think it was, you scoundrel?"

Jack took him by the throat and shook him till his teeth rattled.

"*You!*" came from Bat's shaking lips, being shot out like a wad out of a gun.

"*Me?*"

"Y-yes."

"What did you want to do that to *me* for? Out with it, you villain! Out with it!"

Wilson picked up his cap and seemed about to run.

"Out with it!" Jack said, again lifting his fist as if to strike Bat in the face.

"It was Wil-Wilson?"

"Wilson?"

"Yes."

"Wilson?"

"Yes, he hired us to—t-to——"

"What?"

"To lay for you, and lick you."

"You're a liar!" Wilson yelled.

Then Bat's temper got the better of his fears.

"You're a liar, yourself!" he yelled back. "You know you did!"

"You're a scoundrel!" shouted Wilson, shaking with rage and fear.

"You're another!" screamed Bat. "You hired us—you gave us whisky; two bottles of whisky, which you stole from your father's office; and you——"

"Let me get at him!" Wilson shouted

"All right, come on; come on, confound you! I'm tellin' the truth, and it's you that's the liar. Come on, and I'll do you worse than we did before."

"Who was the other fellow?" Jack demanded.

"Nick Flint. Wilson hired both of us. Here's one of the bottles! No—it's there, in the alley. Maybe both of 'em are there."

"Wilson!"

Jack turned upon him.

"Is this so?" he asked.

"No," said Wilson, brazenly. "It isn't. And when I get Bat Arnold out by ourselves, I'll hammer his face off for saying so."

Jack laughed and threw Bat scornfully from him.

"Cut out!" he cried.

Bat was in a hurry to go, and he went, without a backward look.

Jack turned to Wilson.

"This is the second dirty trick you tried to play me to-night!"

"Don't you believe me?" cried Wilson, hoarsely. "That fellow is a liar."

"We won't talk about it," said Jack, coldly. "I think that fellow told the truth."

Wilson Crane drew himself up.

Reel had kept back in the darkness, and Wilson did not know he was there, and Jack did not intend to tell him that Reel had informed on him, and thus get Reel into trouble.

"Lightfoot," said Wilson, thrusting forward his bird-like head, "you say that just because of what happened to-night at the gym. Well, maybe you think you downed me there; but"—he shook his long finger, and his voice grew louder, as he thus defied Jack again, impelled by rage and the whisky he had swallowed—"that matter isn't settled yet! Remember that, will you? You think you're hot stuff, but you'll learn a few things before you're many days older."

"Bah!" said Jack, as he turned about.

"That's all right!" Wilson sputtered. "Bah all you're a mind to. But you're not through with me yet."

"Wilson," said Jack, turning to him again. "To-night you're simply contemptible. Sometimes you're a

pretty good fellow, but to-night you've lost what little brains you've got and are simply contemptible."

"You're a cad!" Wilson screamed at him. "You think you're *it*. What are you, anyhow? Last year you were nothing, and now you think you're the whole thing! I'm through with you!"

"And I'm through with you!"

"I don't want your friendship. It's something I can get along without. But you can't run me, understand!"

Jack laughed, and that made Wilson hotter than ever.

"No, you can't run me! And there's a lot more you can't run."

"I'm not trying to run anybody but myself."

"Yes, you are; and you've been showing it all summer. But the thing stops right here. A lot of the fellows feel just as I do. And we'll show you a thing or two before we're through. This thing ain't settled yet."

"Wilson, you're contemptible!"

Jack turned away again and moved on toward the house.

Wilson stared at him for a moment, and seemed about to follow him, then thought better of it, and hastened up the street.

Jack was leaning on the gate, when Reel showed up out of the darkness and joined him.

"What do you think of that?" Jack asked. "You heard him."

"I think just as you do, that he's a contemptible puppy. And I don't think you'll say again that there's any good in him."

Jack did not answer this, and after a few words with Reel he let himself into the yard and disappeared.

But he was troubled.

CHAPTER X.

WILSON'S MEETING.

When Wilson had his talk with Ned Skeen the next morning, he confessed his fears that he would not now be permitted to go on the high-school eleven, but said nothing of his adventures after leaving the gym.

He had a scratch on his nose, but explained that by claiming that he had stumbled against the stair railing at home in the dark.

"It's just this way, Skeen," he said, emphasizing with his long forefinger, "since we've gone into this thing, we've got to win, or be nothing the rest of the winter."

"It looks it," said Skeen; "but how're we to win? Jack's got everything his way."

Then Wilson unfolded the beautiful idea which had come to him while he was leaving the gym.

"You heard that motion Lafe made about adjourning the meeting?"

"Yes; it was adjourned till Saturday night."

"Now, was it? It was carried, and the meeting adjourned; but was it to Saturday night?"

"Why, yes, I thought so; that's the way I understood it."

"You heard Lafe make the motion?"

"Yes."

"And I did. And this is the way he worded it: 'Adjourn to meet again at eight o'clock Saturday!' There wasn't a word about Saturday night—not a word; I was listening close, and noticed it at the time."

"But he meant Saturday night!"

"How are we to know what he meant? We know what he said."

"Well, what of it; what if he did fail to say night?"

"That makes the meeting for eight o'clock, Saturday, don't it? That's what the motion said—eight o'clock, Saturday. And eight o'clock, Saturday, is eight o'clock in the morning. Anybody will tell you that. When people mean eight o'clock in the evening they say it."

"What are you up to now?"

"Well, it's this way, Ned, we've got to beat Jack Lightfoot, or step down and out. We're in this to win, or to be beat; and you know what that means."

"I think I know what it means, all right."

"It means, if we're beat, that we're out of everything, for the season—out of football and all the other things."

"You mean to call a meeting for eight o'clock, Saturday morning?"

"It's already called; I haven't anything to do with that. By Lafe's motion, the club was to meet again at eight o'clock, Saturday. We'll rally our friends, and not say a word; and we'll meet at the clubrooms at eight, on Saturday morning; and if we can't do things then I'd like to know why."

"But Jubal will be there—he's janitor!"

"I'll get Jubal away on some pretense; and then we'll call our meeting to order. It will be a regular club meeting, and a majority of members present at any meeting can do what they like. We'll put things through in a way to surprise Jack Lightfoot."

"I won't go into it," said Skeen.

"All right; just as you please. But I'm going ahead, and I can get a lot others. But you can keep your mouth shut, now that I've told you. It would be small, if you should tell."

"Oh, I shan't say anything about it."

Wilson "got busy" again.

He was in a great rage against Jack—had never been in such a rage against him in his life; and now he was determined to go to the limit to defeat him.

So he went softly around, whispering to all the boys he knew he could depend on.

He kept away from Jack, and from Reel; though he by chance met Nick Flint and Bat Arnold, and narrowly escaped a fight with them.

They accused him of more mean things than I should care to soil my pages with repeating, and declared over and over again that they were through with him; while he sent them back as good as they gave him.

Wilson was a mighty busy young fellow all through the hours between that time and eight o'clock on Saturday morning; he hardly took time to eat and sleep.

And when the hour came he was gratified with the result of his work.

He had rallied all the fellows he could influence or cajole in any way, and all those who had not been pleased because Jack had not done wonders for them by giving them preferred places on the nine and other teams, and to whom Wilson had promised marvelous things, if he was made captain. The fact that if he

won out he could not carry out his promises, simply because he had promised too lavishly, did not seem to trouble him. He was like those politicians who, in the midst of a campaign, are willing to promise an office to every man who will vote for them.

Jubal had opened the gym, and was sitting in his office, when a boy came in to tell him that he was wanted by a young fellow who lived at the far eastern end of the town.

Bill Brewster strolled in while the boy was delivering his message.

"Great codfish!" Jubal grumbled. "Why didn't he come daown himself, instead of sendin' yeon?"

"You needn't lock up," said Bill; "I'll be here till you get back."

Then Jubal departed; and he had not been gone long before Wilson's adherents filled the gym, and Wilson, being with them, took the chair, and called the meeting to order.

"It's eight o'clock," he said, looking at his watch, "the time set for this meeting by the vote, Thursday night. I've taken the chair because the regular president isn't here, nor the vice-president, and the hour for the meeting has arrived. As the secretary isn't here, either, I have to appoint a secretary pro tem. I appoint Mr. Ned Skeen secretary pro tem."

Ned rose nervously, at first, to protest; then ambled to the secretary's desk.

He had decided to come down, at the last moment, just to see what would happen, but with the determination to take no part in the proceedings. But this flat-tery on Wilson's part went a long way with Ned. Besides, in looking round and seeing so many fellows there, Ned had a considerable increase of courage.

Though he was now sorry that he had opposed Jack at the regular meeting, he had come to the conclusion that, having done so, his "cake was dough," anyhow; and now he thought it could be no worse, no matter what he did.

"The book with the minutes is in the desk," said Wilson. "I'll ask the secretary to read the minutes of the last meeting."

Ned Skeen found the book, with the minutes written up, and read them.

There, sure enough, as Wilson had said, was Lafe's faulty motion, spread upon the minutes, just as Lafe had worded it:

"Eight o'clock, Saturday."

Wilson smiled when Ned read that.

The minutes were adopted as read, as no one opposed it.

Then Wilson was ready for business.

"This is the meeting called by that motion," he said.

The boy who had been stationed at the door below, with orders to report anything unusual, hurried in and said that Lafe Lampton was coming, and this threw the meeting into a flutter.

But Lafe went on down to the lake.

Jubal might be back soon, Wilson knew, and he proceeded to expedite matters.

"With your consent, I will now appoint three members to select an eleven to represent the gym."

The members consented, by their silence; and Wilson named two members, one of whom was Ned Skeen, and the other Bill Brewster.

Nat Kimball came in at this juncture, being a little late. His black eyes and his black hair were shining.

Wilson had told Nat that the crowd which had gone against Jack would have to stand together, or fall together, and little Nat was there to do his part of the "standing." Now Wilson put Nat on as the third member of the committee.

"The committee of three will retire and make up an eleven, and a list of substitutes," said Wilson, who had assumed the reins and was rushing things in a hurry.

The "committee" retired behind Ned's desk, and with pencils and paper began the work, while the other fellows whispered and talked among themselves.

Nat looked troubled, yet his face was stern. He was ready to do or die, once having entered into this thing.

It was as when Oki Matsuki, the Japanese instructor, came to Cranford, and Nat was compelled to stand for him alone. He had not shirked then, and he did not shirk now. That experience was still fresh in his mind, and he held it against Jack.

When the "committee" read off their list of eleven, there was a good deal of murmuring. Some of those to whom Wilson had promised great things were not mentioned even among the substitutes.

But what surprised them most was that Jack Lightfoot's name was among the eleven.

Wilson explained this smoothly:

"He's the president of the club, you know, and a good player, and a fine trainer. It won't do to leave him off, if we want to win games."

He hoped, dimly, that putting him on the eleven would mollify Jack.

Lafe's name was also on the nine, and Jubal's.

Among the other members were Wilson, Ned Skeen, Bill Brewster and Nat Kimball.

"Are you ready to adopt this report?" said Wilson, still hurrying things, to prevent an interruption from outside.

The others, some still grumbling, voted this, though it had barely a majority.

Wilson was almost on the point of having a rebellion on his own hands right there.

But the motion to adopt went through by a close shave, and the eleven named were declared to be the high-school eleven.

Then Wilson, on motion, promptly adjourned the meeting, after commanding the secretary to write up the minutes, so that they could be in readiness.

Wilson wanted the minutes on the record, for he thought that would help him.

There was no cheering, no noisy demonstrations, as when the previous meeting had adjourned; but all slipped downstairs and stole away.

When Jubal Marlin returned, after having been absent nearly an hour, even Bill Brewster was gone.

"Great codfish, I couldn't find that feller!" he grunted. "Why in time did he send for me, and then go off some'eres where I couldn't find him?"

CHAPTER XI.

JACK LIGHTFOOT'S NERVE.

All this took place at eight o'clock, Saturday morning.

At eight o'clock, Saturday evening, Jack's friends began to gather at the gym, for the meeting which they expected to hold.

They found Wilson and his adherents there in force before them; though Wilson's crowd had not attempted to do anything.

The two parties kept pretty much aloof, as if they instinctively scented another battle.

Jack did not even speak to Wilson, nor notice him in any way.

When Jack took the chair and the meeting came to order, Wilson slowly unwound his long legs and stood up.

"Mr. President," he said, "I rise simply to inquire when this meeting was called?"

Jack stared at him, for he knew nothing of the morning meeting, so well had Wilson and his friends kept their secret.

"It was called Thursday night," he answered, speaking courteously.

"There was a motion passed Thursday night," said Wilson. "It was made by Lafe Lampton, I think, calling a meeting for eight o'clock, Saturday. I heard that motion made and voted for it; but what about this meeting?"

He thrust his long hands down into his pockets, bent his small head forward on the end of his long neck, and looked at Jack defiantly.

"That is the meeting I have just called to order," Jack answered.

"But the meeting mentioned by that motion has already been held," Wilson announced.

There was a decided stir in the room.

"When was it held?"

"At the time named by Lafe Lampton's motion—eight o'clock!"

"This is eight o'clock, you ninny!" some one howled at him.

Jack rapped for order.

He began to understand Wilson, but Wilson had the floor, and Jack would not permit a member who had the floor and was speaking to be interrupted, so long as he seemed to be in order. Wilson was appar-

ently asking an explanation, and was apparently entitled to it.

"The meeting named in Mr. Lampton's motion is now being held," declared Jack, firmly.

"I demand the reading of the minutes of the previous meeting," said Wilson. "That will show that——"

He did not finish, but sat down.

His birdlike face was flushed, but he had not been drinking.

Jack asked the secretary to read the minutes of the previous meeting, for that was the thing in order.

When the secretary opened the book and began to read, he was himself amazed, for the minutes he saw there were not in his own handwriting, but had been put there later than his report of the Thursday night meeting.

He stopped.

"There's some mistake here," he said; and he turned the book over to see if he had not got hold of the wrong records.

"Those are the minutes," said Wilson, "and I demand that they be read."

Jack now saw through the whole thing—had been given a knowledge of it by the few words the secretary read before he stopped in confusion.

However, he wanted to know what had been done at that meeting, and he instructed the secretary to read what he found there.

The gym was now seething with excitement. Twice Lafe Lampton rose to say something, but, seeing the look in Jack's eye, dropped back into his seat.

The secretary read the minutes, amid much confusion—the minutes of the eight o'clock morning meeting.

As soon as he had read them Wilson was again on his feet.

"I move you, Mr. President, that the minutes as read be adopted."

"Second the motion," one of his adherents shouted.

Jack hesitated, wondering if this were a motion he ought to put. He had never encountered a case just like this.

A dozen boys were on their feet; but Wilson had been up first, and Jack again recognized him.

"Mr. Wilson Crane was first up, I believe," he announced.

"I ask that the motion be put," said Wilson. "If there's to be any discussion of it, I demand the right to say something."

"But, Jiminy crickets, there wasn't any meeting this morning!" Lafe sputtered, quite stirred out of his usual lethargy.

"How do you know there wasn't?" Wilson asked, from his seat.

"But I know what my motion said—eight o'clock, Saturday night."

"I ask that the minutes of the Thursday night meeting be consulted by the secretary to determine that point," Wilson demanded.

"The secretary will please consult the minutes of Thursday's meeting on that point," Jack ordered.

"Eight o'clock, Saturday!" the secretary read.

Jack now recognized Lafe, who had been standing up for some time, and Lafe declared that any meeting other than the one intended was no meeting, and could not possibly be a meeting.

Wilson unwound his long legs again, as Lafe sat down.

"Mr. President, may I say a word?"

"Go on!" said Jack, his gray-blue eyes shining and his face growing somewhat pale.

"The minutes consulted by the secretary show that the motion made by my friend Lampton was worded, 'eight o'clock, Saturday.' Anyone who knows anything knows that eight o'clock, Saturday, is eight o'clock in the morning, not eight o'clock at night."

"But I know what I meant; and so do you, and so would anybody with any sense!" Lafe interrupted.

A dozen were trying to speak, and were shouting remarks from their seats, and Jack rapped with the gavel for order.

"Wilson Crane has the floor."

"Any lawyer will tell you," Wilson now continued, "that the words and meaning of a law passed by a legislature is what controls; not what some member of the legislature thought it meant. When a question of law goes to a court to be decided, the judge does not send for the members of the legislature who passed

that law, but he looks at the wording of it. The members of the legislature might be dead, but, dead or living, their opinion of what the law means counts for nothing. It's the law itself, and its meaning is explained by what is written in it.

"And it is so here. No matter what Lafe Lampton or any other member of this club thought the words of that motion Thursday night meant, we have to judge what they meant by the words themselves. They're there on the record!" He shook his finger at the record book. "That record has to decide, and nothing else; and your secretary has just told you that it says 'eight o'clock, Saturday.'"

"But——" Lafe began, rising.

Jack rapped with the gavel.

"Wilson Crane has the floor!"

"I want to say, further," Wilson went on, in the midst of the storm his words created, while he pushed his hands deep into his pockets and thrust his bird-like face forward, "that many members of this club, besides myself, understood that meeting to be called for eight o'clock, Saturday, just as it reads; and, acting in accordance with that, and in obedience to the call itself, we met, at eight o'clock, here in the clubroom, and the minutes of the meeting are there on our record book, and are as much entitled to respect as the minutes of any other meeting."

Lafe tried again to get on his feet.

"I ask now," said Wilson, taking his right hand out and shaking his long forefinger, "that those minutes be adopted as read."

Jack beckoned to Lafe. There was need of a leader on the floor, to combat Wilson, and Lafe, willing and clever as he was, seemed just now to be somewhat bewildered.

When Lafe came forward, Jack asked him to take the chair, and descended himself to the floor, thus becoming, for the time, a private member, with the privilege of speaking to any question that came up for discussion.

Wilson had sat down, and the gym rang with the applause of those who were supporting him.

"Mr. Chairman," Jack began, getting on his feet before any other, "I wish to say a few words."

Lafe hammered vigorously to still the tumult.

"I want to say this," said Jack, "and that is, that we do not have to adopt those minutes. The first thing to do is to vote down the motion that has been made to adopt them."

He turned to Lafe.

"A motion has been made and seconded to adopt those minutes, or those so-called minutes. It is the duty of the chairman to put that motion. But it can be voted down, if there are enough fellows in this house willing to see fair play."

Lafe hammered again with the gavel to still the tumult, and, rising, put the motion.

"Vote it down!" Jack shouted to his friends. "I call on all my friends to vote it down!"

"All in favor of the motion," Lafe began, intending to call for the "ayes" and "noes."

Jack interrupted.

"I demand a rising vote on this. I want to see who is willing to stand up and be counted in favor of this outrage."

"All in favor of that motion," said Lafe, "rise to your feet."

"All who stand up now are voting in favor of Wilson Crane and his crowd," said Jack, lifting his voice so that all might understand.

Wilson was already rising, and boys got up all over the room, Ned Skeen and Nat Kimball being among them, and also Bill Brewster.

"The secretary will count those standing," said Lafe.

All stood until they were counted, and Jack scanned them closely to see who they were.

"All opposed, rise to their feet," said Lafe.

Jack and his friends arose; and he saw at once that he had won, by a narrow margin.

This standing vote was counted, and Lafe announced that the motion to adopt the minutes of the morning meeting had been lost.

Jack decided now to take the bull by the horns.

If all those who had voted with him just now would stand by him, he could control the meeting.

"I now move you, Mr. Chairman," he said, "that it be declared to be the sense of this club that the words, 'eight o'clock, Saturday,' which appear in the report

of the Thursday night meeting, mean, eight o'clock, Saturday night."

"Second the motion," cried red-headed Bob Brewster, glaring in the direction of his brother Bill.

Jack spoke to the motion, stating that the club had a right to declare the meaning of its own words, or even to change them, just as a legislature has a right to declare the meaning of a law, or to make a new law that will destroy the older one.

There was a hot discussion on this point, Wilson Crane opposing Jack with much ability; for Wilson, with all his faults, was nobody's fool.

When the vote was taken again the boys in the gym stood with Jack, though his margin was so close that he could not take great comfort in it.

Once more Jack was on his feet.

He had decided to go to the extreme limit.

"And now, Mr. Chairman," he said, "I ask that the names of the committee who appear as reporting an eleven at the morning meeting be read from the minutes of that meeting."

"Ned Skeen, Bill Brewster, Nat Kimball," read the secretary.

"Wilson Crane was chairman of that fake meeting?"

"He appears on the records as having taken the chair."

"Read any other names that appear in those pretended minutes," Jack requested.

All the other names there were read.

"Now, Mr. Chairman," said Jack, while a fierce light burned in his gray-blue eyes, "I move you, sir, if I can get a second, that Ned Skeen, Bill Brewster, Nat Kimball, Wilson Crane, and all those others whose names appear there, and who by that are shown to have taken part in the fake meeting held here this morning, be expelled incontinently from this club."

A yell arose from Jack's friends.

"One of the articles of our constitution," Jack went on, "provides that when any member is guilty of ungentlemanly and unbecoming conduct, or conduct prejudicial to the club or the high school, that member may be expelled from the gym club by a majority vote of the members at any meeting."

Ned Skeen and Nat Kimball looked startled.

Even Wilson seemed somewhat disturbed.

"I second that motion," said Jubal Marlin. "By-granny, they'd ought tew be expelled! Fellows who'd do like that ain't fit tew be members of the club."

The tumult was so great now that Lafe had to hammer for a minute or more before he could get any semblance of order.

Wilson and others declared that this was an outrage, and clearly illegal, and many other things too numerous to recount here.

But Jack stood to his guns.

His face was red as brick dust and his eyes were flashing fire.

"I demand the immediate expulsion of the members whose names have been read!" he cried. "Their conduct has been ungentlemanly, unbecoming, and prejudicial to the club. They are clearly guilty, and by their acts have forfeited their rights to seats in this club and to membership in the gymnasium. I demand, sir, their immediate expulsion."

Lafe rose to put the vote, and then Wilson's crowd tried to howl him down.

They had risen to their feet. But they sat down quickly, when Jack asked for a rising vote of all who favored his motion, for they did not want the secretary to count them as voting in favor of it.

Jack had wanted them to sit down, and now they were sitting down.

Jack rose, with his friends, but he noticed that Bob Brewster did not rise, and that some others who had voted with him before had not risen. Bob did not want his brother expelled.

Those standing were counted, and the count of the vote was announced.

Then the vote of the opposition was taken.

Jack had won!

Wilson Crane, Nat Kimball, Ned Skeen, Bill Brewster and several others had been expelled from the gym.

The meeting broke up in wild confusion.

"We'll reverse this vote at another meeting!" yelled Wilson Crane.

"Oh, you will, will you?" Jack shouted at him. "I guess you won't vote at all at any other meeting of

this gym club; for the reason that you're no longer members."

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

I should not be a true recorder of the history of the athletic boys of Cranford if I did not report the fact, regrettable though it was, that there were some fist fights on the outside of the gymnasium that night, after this hot and tumultuous meeting had adjourned.

Jack Lightfoot was himself mixed up in one of them, provoked to it by Wilson Crane and some others who came fuming round him, calling him by some very unpleasant names.

Lafe Lampton threatened violently to spank Nat Kimball and Ned Skeen; and Jubal Marline had a lively set-to with a young fellow whom he heard roundly denouncing Jack.

Altogether, that was a rather wild evening, and enough bad blood was stirred up to keep things in an unpleasant ferment for a number of days.

Nat Kimball and Ned Skeen got out of the crowd as soon as they could, and faded away.

Bill Brewster did the same.

But Wilson Crane stayed out on the street in front of the gym as long as anyone, arguing with whoever would listen to him.

Though he had been defeated, he would not acknowledge it.

"Well, even if that outrageous vote should hold," he said, before he went away, "what does it amount to? We can organize a club of our own and have a gym of our own. Lightfoot's crowd aren't the only people. There are a few other young fellows in the high school. I imagine some more athletic apparatus might be found in the city of New York, and there are other buildings here which could be hired. If they think they can get along without us, we can get along without them."

Notwithstanding these loud words, Wilson was not feeling just the best when he finally wended his way homeward.

He felt that, after all, he had been defeated, and defeated badly.

Jack had been too strong and too clever for him, and had still too many friends.

"But if I lie down and say I'm whipped, that finishes me," was his unpleasant thought, "and I'll not be on any eleven this year!"

And Wilson, as one of the best runners in Cranford, had been anxious to show his ability in football, anticipating the plaudits of the spectators, when he should take the ball round an end, or across the line, after a great outburst of speed.

It would be rather hard, Wilson felt, to forego all that.

"Maybe I was a fool for going into the thing at the start, but I'm in it now, and I'm not going to lie down and say I'm whipped!"

He stuck to that all the way home, and said it over to himself a good many times that night before going to bed.

* * * * *

Reel came to Jack, after the meeting, as he had done after the previous meeting, waylaying him, as it were, on the street.

"What about that, Lightfoot?"

"About the meeting?"

"About presenting my name to the club?"

"I forgot all about it, and that's the fact," Jack admitted. "But, anyway, I couldn't have got a vote on it if I had tried. We had regular war up there to-night—war of the worst kind. We expelled some members, and, of course, while in a fight like that, was no time to present your name."

He stood looking at Reel.

"I've talked with some, as I said to you I would, and, to tell the truth, Reel, unless you want to risk the humiliation of rejection, I'm not sure that it's wise to offer your name at all."

"You think there's really danger?"

"I do."

Reel was silent for a moment.

"What did you do about the new eleven—the eleven that was to be selected to go against Tidewater and other places?"

"Oh, that was an eleven to be chosen from both the high school and the academy; and, of course, nothing

about it would come up before this meeting, which was strictly a meeting of the high-school gym."

"But there will be such an eleven?"

"Yes."

"Do you know who'll be on it?"

"I don't—not yet."

"But you've some idea?"

"Yes, some idea; but I'm not ready to say anything about that yet."

They walked on toward Jack's home.

"And you're really afraid that if my name goes in, I will be, as you may say, kicked out?"

"Yes, I'm afraid of it; I hate to say so, but I truly am."

"Then let it drop!" said Reel. "I'm as good as a lot of fellows in that club; but, if they don't want me, that settles it with me. There are other places a fellow can go to. They're not the only people."

* * * * *

Just before the next meeting, which was held two evenings later, Ned Skeen, Nat Kimball and Bill Brewster came to Jack.

They had had time to think the whole thing over, and they had arrived at a penitent mood.

Jack was at home, in the shed room, and was just thinking of putting away his tools and starting for the gym, when they came in.

All looked much confused; and Ned, who had been chosen as spokesman, was evidently at a loss to know what to say.

"Glad to see you," said Jack, who thought he knew what they wanted, by their manner.

"It's this way," said Skeen, stammering and hesitating. "We've been a lot of fools and soreheads."

"Big ones!" said Bill Brewster.

Little Nat's dark face was troubled, but he said nothing.

"And so we've come down," Skeen went on, "to tell you so; and to tell you that we'd like to get back into the club and into the gym."

Jack had no desire to "rub it in."

He extended his hand, while a pleased light came into his face.

"Skeen, I've always wanted you for my friend, and

Kimball and Brewster, too; and I'll do what I can for you. Of course, you understand that it will take more than my vote; but I'll stand up for you, if you want to come into the gym again. But——"

He hesitated.

"Oh, we'll have to take our medicine," said Brewster; "we know that!"

"Well, you'll have to apologize to the club, of course."

"We're willing to do that," Skeen admitted. "And a lot of the others who were in that thing feel just the same."

He had expected a sharp "call down" from Jack, and it warmed his heart when Jack met his advances so generously.

Little Nat, who was really a good-hearted fellow, though sometimes apt to be ugly and hard-headed, was as much pleased as Skeen.

And the same may be said of Bill Brewster.

"Bob told me I was a red-headed fool for going into that thing," he acknowledged. "But I'd got tired of doing nothing but play substitute, and Wilson thought he could get me on the eleven."

"Wilson couldn't have put all his friends on the team, when there are only eleven places."

"No, he couldn't, but he told me he'd get me on."

"Fellows," Jack went on, genially, "the best way to do in a thing of this kind, is to forget it. I'll bring the matter up at the next meeting, and I'll speak a good word for you, and Lafe will do the same, I'm sure. You let Wilson lead you away; but that will be a bygone, so far as I am concerned."

* * * * *

When the meeting was held, which was soon, Jack was as good as his promise.

In the meantime, word had gone round that Skeen and Kimball and Bill Brewster had been to Jack, and others came also.

More than half the rebellious malcontents who had followed Wilson Crane attended that meeting, ready to admit their wrongdoing, and those who had been expelled were ready to ask to be taken back into the gym and into the club.

Jack made the motion that they should again be

admitted, and it was seconded by Lafe; and both Jack and Lafe made short speeches in favor of it, saying that differences of opinion in regard to conducting a nine, or an eleven, or any other athletic team, could be expected; but that the way to settle them was by being fair and square, and meeting opposition, and everything else, in an honorable and straightforward way; and that they were sure those who again sought membership felt disposed to conduct themselves in that fashion.

But those who thus returned had to submit to the humiliation of standing up and publicly confessing to the club that they had been in the wrong, and saw it now, and intended to try to follow a different path in the future.

As a recorder of Cranford athletic events, it pleases me to say that Jack's motion, as seconded by Lafe, and supported by them, was passed by the club without a single dissenting vote, and that all the young fellows who asked to be taken in again were re-admitted to full membership without any objection.

They were clever fellows, and the most of them good athletes; and so were just the sort of which a good club membership should be composed.

But Wilson Crane did not apply for re-admittance.

He did not ask for pardon.

He came neither to Lafe nor to Jack; but stubbornly remained away.

"If they can do without me, I can do without them!" he said, defiantly, but there were times when he felt a lump in his throat as he found himself pretty much left to his own devices, and bitterly did he regret having stirred up that meeting at the "gym."

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 38, will be "Jack Lightfoot, Half-Back; or, Playing the Giants of the League." As this will be the first football story of the series, you will want to read it, in order to see how the Cranford boys handle the pigskin, as well as to follow the further doings of the fellows who had just passed through such a fiery time in the gym. You may be sure that things were decidedly lively, and that a good story is in store for you. Next week.

HOW TO DO THINGS

By AN OLD ATHLETE.

Timely essays and hints upon various athletic sports and pastimes, in which our boys are usually deeply interested, and told in a way that may be easily understood. Instructive articles may be found in back numbers of the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY, as follows: No. 14, "How to Become a Batter." No. 15, "The Science of Place Hitting and Bunting." No. 16, "How to Cover First Base." No. 17, "Playing Shortstop." No. 18, "Pitching." No. 19, "Pitching Curves." No. 20, "The Pitcher's Team Work." No. 21, "Playing Second Base." No. 22, "Covering Third Base." No. 23, "Playing the Outfield." No. 24, "How to Catch." (I.) No. 25, "How to Catch." (II.) No. 26, "How to Run Bases." No. 27, "Coaching and the Coach." No. 28, "How to Umpire." No. 29, "How to Manage Players." No. 30, "Baseball Points." No. 31, "How to Make a Cheap Skiff." No. 32, "Archery." No. 33, "Cross-Country Running." No. 34, "The Game of Lacrosse." No. 35, "The Boy With a Hobby for Collecting." No. 36, "Football, and How to Play It."

A PRACTICE GAME.

In the first of our talks we discussed the requisites of football, the playing field, the team and ball, and the clothing to be worn by the players. We will suppose that you have your field 330 feet long and 160 feet wide, with your goal posts in their proper positions, and your side lines properly marked for determining advance. You have a sufficient number of fellows who want to play the game who are equipped, in the way of clothing, for the rough work before them. Now the question is: "How to play?"

Well, the answer is a good deal easier than you might suppose. It is: "Play, play, play." Split your crowd of boys into two divisions, select some one for umpire and referee, and begin to learn your game by beginning to play it.

After the two sides are arranged and the leader of each has been selected—for in games, as well as in everything else in life, some one must be the head and the responsible director, even if it's only for the fun of blaming him in defeat—they meet in the center of the field and toss up for the choice of goal, or kick-off. Usually one toss of the coin is held sufficient to determine this. The winner of the toss can now do one of two things. If the wind is blowing steadily from behind one goal he will choose that and let the opponent take the kick-off. It is good policy to have your opponents jamming the wind, since the game is for each side to get the ball across the other's goal line. If there is no wind, usually the winner chooses the kick and lets the opponent take whichever goal he pleases, the winner then playing toward that goal.

After the kick-off, the teams line up for play. The team holding the ball places it in the exact center of the field, the players beside the kicker scatter along the line on the side of their own goal, prepared to rush across as soon as the ball is in play. The opponents retire ten yards into their own territory. The kicker sends the ball down into their territory, some player catches it and prepares to run up the field toward the other goal, while at the same time the men scattered along the line rush down to oppose the progress of those now having the ball. The man running with the ball is tackled and held so that he can make no further progress. Both ball and player now being stopped, the referee blows his whistle, the ball is declared "down," and playing ceases for a moment, the ball remaining in possession of the team to which the runner belongs.

As soon as the players get disentangled—for a down usually means that pretty nearly every player who can get

in the play of stopping or helping the runner has got in, and when the whistle blows is under or over another player in the squirming pile of humanity around the ball—the side holding the ball lines up, the ball remaining in the place it was declared down. The center straddles the ball, guarded on either side by three players, guard, tackle and end; behind him is the quarter, stooping to receive the ball from center, and further in the rear the half and full-backs. The quarter announces the signals, and at the proper moment the center snaps the ball to the quarter, who passes it to the player delegated, in a second's conference between the runners—the backs of the team—and the latter endeavors to carry the ball forward, assisted by the members of his own team. The opponents line up facing the holders of the ball, guards, center, tackles and ends being usually matched on either side of the imaginary line between the players. The opponent's backs usually remain behind, ready for the two possible plays to be made by the holders of the ball. Either the player delegated to receive it will rush round one end of the line and endeavor to run up the field, or an attempt will be made to break the line and let the runner get through there for his rush down the field. The plays may be described as "around the end" and "bucking the line."

Right here come up the "off-side," of which you will hear so much. To understand this, bear in mind that when the ball is resting on the ground before it has been put in play by the center passing it to the quarter, an imaginary line is drawn through the central point of contact between the ball and the earth, and indicates the limit of territory belonging to the holders of the ball. The moment a player on the team crosses that imaginary line he is "off-side." No play can be made while any player is "off-side." As soon as the ball is in play, they are theoretically off-side, because the line continues with the ball. This distinction is made in view of the rules of the interference. When the rush comes the players of the defense are not permitted, when thus off-side, to use their hands or their arms in interfering with the advance of the opponents, whereas these may use their hands and arms in advance. The defense or interference is thus practically tied down to perform its work by the interference of bodies alone.

After the ball is put in play and the runner endeavors to advance it, the opponents endeavor to stop him, to create a "down." When this is done, the players again line up as before, and the game goes on in a succession of such plays. The holders of the ball retain possession of it as long as they make five yards' advance for every three downs, the referee announcing after each down its number and the number of yards to gain if the holders are to retain the ball; as, for instance: "Second down, three yards to gain." If progress by the ordinary scrimmage and rush seems impossible, the player who receives the ball may try to kick a goal from the field. If his kick fall short, a rush is made for the ball, and it belongs to the side to which the player belongs who gets possession of it. The principle of this is that when the ball is kicked toward the goal, the opponents will probably get it, and since it will probably be pretty near their own goal, it gives the kicker's team a greater opportunity to hold the opponents in getting up the field toward the goal they are working for, and, at the very least, delaying

(Continued on page 30.)

A CHAT WITH YOU

Under this general head we purpose each week to sit around the camp fire, and have a heart-to-heart talk with those of our young readers who care to gather there, answering such letters as may reach us asking for information with regard to various healthy sports, both indoor and out. We should also be glad to hear what you think of the leading characters in your favorite publication. It is the editor's desire to make this department one that will be eagerly read from week to week by every admirer of the Jack Lightfoot stories, and prove to be of valuable assistance in building up manly, healthy Sons of America. All letters received will be answered immediately, but may not appear in print under five weeks, owing to the fact that the publication must go to press far in advance of the date of issue. Those who favor us with correspondence will please bear this in mind, and exercise a little patience.

THE EDITOR.

I have read your ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY from No. 1 up to the current issue, No. 28, and I have yet to find one that I did not thoroughly enjoy.

There is only one library that has been ahead of it, and that one is *Tip Top Weekly*. The two of them together can't be beat. After I buy them I am often undecided which one to read first.

I am glad Mr. Stevens does not look favorably on the Japanese method of self-defense. No true American should. Your heart-to-heart talks in the back of the books are a boon to all ambitious young athletes.

I would be pleased to exchange souvenir postals with any ALL-SPORTS reader. Hoping this library will continue for a long while to come,

FRANK H. HENDRICK.

237 Hewitt Street, Trenton, N. J.

Your letter has the right ring; but we hope you will, after a while, conclude that ALL-SPORTS has climbed to the very top, and outdistanced every competitor.

Well, for one I'm sorry the baseball season is nearly over, because I couldn't begin to tell you how much I've enjoyed those rattling stories of yours. Mr. Stevens seems to have a knack of telling about a thing so that you can just imagine you're there watching the game. I want to thank him. Honestly, I've finished some of ALL-SPORTS with the same enthusiasm I would have felt if I'd been watching Jack pitch, and Lafe eat a peanut before he lathered out the ball with "Old Wagon Tongue." I wonder how many two-baggers and home runs that same stick has sent out during the season. The boys ought to have it gold-plated and hung up in the gym. They are a lively, hustling lot of fellows, those Cranford boys, and I only wish I knew such a crowd. It makes me "homesick," sometimes, because I don't. I hope I'll enjoy the football stories as well.

Savannah, Ga.

DUKE MORRISON.

It's a pleasure to receive a message like the one you send, Duke. You are in good company, for there are many others among our multitude of readers who wish they knew Jack and his friends in the flesh. It is doubtful whether they will hang up the faithful old stick in the way you propose, for doubtless they calculate upon making a few more drives with it next season on the diamond.

I am another one of the Phil Kirtland admirers, and I don't hesitate about showing my colors either. Somehow, it strikes me that Phil is a more natural type of boy than either Jack or Tom Lightfoot. I never could bear the "goody-goody" style of a fellow. He seems to be a sort of "mugwump," as they say in politics, thinking himself better than other people. Phil has great possibilities in his make-up, though, of course, I know it's going to be just as the author pleases whether Phil keeps on being sore at Jack to the end of the chapter or breaks in with him. If he does this last, you can just bet your bottom dollar he'll turn out to be a crackerjack of a friend. The stories are all

to the good—gilt-edged, in fact, and I'd sooner do without a meal on Saturday than miss one of them. That's talking some, I guess. But I still say I'm very fond of Kirtland, and I'd be glad to see him get a square show with Jack.

WILLIAM SANDT.

Easton, Pa.

Always glad to know Phil has such staunch friends, and we hope their faith in his eventually "making good" may be justified. Phil is as yet rather a character in the course of development, and it is very uncertain just what the author means to do with him. Doubtless Mr. Stevens has it all mapped out, and possibly Kirtland may some day come to the front in a way bound to arouse the hearty enthusiasm of his admirers.

What is good for lying awake nights? I used to drink coffee every meal, but gave that up a long time back. No good. Then I stopped taking tea at supper, but I kept right along lying there for hours with my eyes shut and my brain just crammed with every kind of thing. It never bothers me any in the daytime, only when I want to forget everything and sleep. Such a thing makes a fellow feel old and look bad, too. I am fourteen and strongly built. I guess there are few fellows who could beat me in all sorts of athletics. I have no bad habits except smoking cigarettes. Do you think they could hurt a boy in fine physical condition? Please let me know.

DOUGLAS CONNOR.

Cincinnati, Ohio.

Do we? Just knock off your cigarettes, young fellow, and see if you don't sleep soundly. Of course they are getting in their work, as usual, in an insidious way. Loss of sleep first, then loss of appetite, extreme nervousness, and finally, perhaps, insanity. We have known a young boy who took his own life simply through the injurious effect of the cigarette habit. Stop it before you become a perfect slave to the weed. It is well named "coffin nail," for each one you smoke is apt to bring you a step nearer the final scene. Take this advice, give the cigarette the go by for a month, and ten to one you will enjoy such refreshing sleep that your good sense will never allow you to take up the injurious habit again. Turks and such people may indulge in it without apparent injury, but in this country, with its electrified atmosphere, and everything on the jump, few men can do it without injury to their constitution sooner or later.

Will you please tell me whether I am up to the average, or small for my age and height? I am 15, and measure 5 feet 4½ inches. Around the chest I am 31 inches, while my weight is 106 pounds. I have a long reach and a strong grip. My best point seems to be running, and among my baseball friends I'm known as

WHITE WINGS.

Davenport, Ia.

Yes, you are a little below the average; a couple of inches more about the chest would be better, while you could also stand a few more pounds weight. Still, in all probability, the more flesh you gain the less speedy you are apt to become. Build up your lung capacity and pay little attention to gaining weight. You were probably intended by nature to be a sprinter, and good lungs are of prime importance to anyone desirous of accomplishing big things in the athletic line.

I am always deeply interested in the letters you print at the end of the story. I wish you gave more space to them, but of course you could not do that without cutting the story short, and then I guess there would be a big howl all around. I notice, however, that one of your competitors has of late taken to using the inside covers of the library for this purpose, and would sug-

gest that ALL-SPORTS do the same. I began reading about Jack Lightfoot just through accident, and now it has become such a settled habit that I'd hate like everything to give it up. I could tell you some amusing experiences I've had with ALL-SPORTS if I had the space—of how two different gentlemen tackled me about reading "trash," and when I stood up for the story, how they read the same, and while one, the dominie, admitted reluctantly that it wasn't at all what he thought, the other, our good old family doctor—say, don't tell it, but he really and truly borrowed all my copies the other day, just to see if all the stories compared with the one he read. He's a jolly old fellow, is doc, and I've since learned that when he was young he played one season on Princeton's nine. Well, I must ring off, or you'll be dropping this effusion in the waste-paper basket. Please don't print my name if you put this in the Chat pages.

Trenton, N. J.

A CRANFORD FAN.

Your experience has been that of many. We do not wonder the doctor fell in love with ALL-SPORTS after he read it. Any man who has been fond of college sport never fully gets over his weakness, and such stories as ours must stir his sluggish blood again, bringing back many thrilling memories of days long past.

I think ALL-SPORTS is the best weekly published, because it deals with the boys as they are, just like everyday American boys. I have read every one up to date, and am going to have them bound. The only thing I don't like about them is that we get them out here only about every two weeks. Couldn't you fix it so we could get them every week regularly?

I think all the characters are fine; in order, they would come something like this: Jack, Tom, Lafe, Nat, Phil, Brodie, Ned, and last, but not least, Jubal. Of the girls, I like Lily Livingston and, well, it's a toss up between Nellie C. and Kate S.

Unlike most of the boys, I think jiu-jitsu is all right. A great many are raising the cry that it is a cowardly way to defend one's self. I say it is not. Was it cowardly when, in No. 21, Nat threw that villain, Simon Legree, and perhaps saved himself a severe pounding? Again you might say, What is to prevent the villains of the country from learning it and putting it to a bad use? Well, I say, What is there to keep them from becoming pugilists and putting that to a bad use? I think there are two good reasons for upholding jiu-jitsu. First, it takes a good deal of brains; second, it takes lots of time and patience to learn it. But that's enough on jiu-jitsu. Now, I don't mean to say that the good old American way is not as good as jiu-jitsu, but I don't think, for defending one's self, it is any better or more honorable.

Well, I will close, with what I think is quite a compliment to Mr. Stevens. I let one of my friends take No. 15 of your library, and when he returned it, he said the ball game number was the only one, real or imaginary, that he ever became interested in, and he is pretty hard to suit, too. With the best regards to M. S. and the W. L. Co., I remain (from the City of Destiny),

A FRIEND OF NAT'S.

Tacoma, Wash.

I have read ALL-SPORTS for six months now, and would like to get the earlier numbers. Can I send the money for them direct to you, or must I order through a news-dealer? The stories suit me first-class, and I don't hesitate to recommend them to my boy friends. I think boys can learn lots of good things from what Mr. Stevens writes. And besides, in the pages at the end of each book I generally find a lot to interest me. One thing I've noticed, and it is this. Though there are some who think Phil should have a better show, not a single one has, up to now, said they believed him to be Jack's equal. They dare not. Jack has proved his sterling worth on many a hard-fought baseball field, and I don't doubt but what he will do the same when football comes to town. Mr. Stevens suits me better than any living writer, bar none. I read ALL-SPORTS almost holding my breath with interest. The characters live at the time, and I can see things move along just like a panorama. I hope he'll continue to write about the Cranford boys for years to come, for I'm dead certain I'll never be too old to read about Jack Lightfoot and dear old Tom and bully Lafe.

Boston, Mass.

GREGORY T. SMITH, JR.

You can do either—if more convenient, send stamps to us and

we will mail the earlier numbers, or else order through your dealer. Your letter does much to encourage us, and we certainly thank you, and print it with pleasure.

("How to do Things")—Continued from page 28.

the play till the end of the half, so as to prevent them scoring.

There is one other important element entering into the game which must be mentioned at this point—the "fair catch." This is made from a kick by the opponents, the catcher taking the ball on the fly without anyone else on his side touching it and planting his heels in the ground on the spot the catch was made. He is entitled to a free-kick, the opponents not being allowed to come within ten yards of his heel marks while he and his team can retire toward their own goal and then kick—punt, drop-kick or place-kick. He must make an actual kick of at least ten yards. The rules of off-side are in force.

If in the run the ball is carried across the side line, it is out of bounds and must be brought back into the field on a line with its point of crossing. It must be carried at least five yards in from the side lines and not more than fifteen, announcement being made by the player before he enters the field of how many paces in he intends to carry it, teams lining up for scrimmage as soon as he has reached his position.

When the ball has been carried down the field and across the end line, a "touch-down" is scored. The ball is then brought out and a place-kick made for goal, the opponents lining up behind their goal line. When near the goal, it may seem unadvisable to attempt to rush the ball, and he may try a drop-kick or place-kick for goal.

If he attempt this within the twenty-five yard line, and fail, the ball is brought out only to the ten-yard line for the kick-off; that is, the line-up and play used at the beginning of the game. The scoring is the point to consider in choosing methods. A goal from the field counts 4 points. A touch-down counts 5 points. A touch-down and goal—when the ball is brought out for the kick, counts 6 points. It may happen that the opponents get possession of the ball almost at the goal line. If advance is impossible, under certain conditions of the rules, these latter may then carry the ball across their own goal. Such play scores 2 for the opposing side, but it prevents the opponent getting possession of the ball in a dangerous place and scoring more. This play is called a safety, and gives the side giving it an opportunity to carry the ball out to the twenty-five-yard line and taking a kick-off.

After a goal or touch-down, the ball is carried back to the center of the field by the opponents for a kick-off. These may take the kick-off themselves or allow the team which has just scored to kick-off.

The game is divided into halves of thirty-five minutes' play. After the first half comes a ten-minute intermission. At the beginning of the second half, the side which did not have the kick-off at the beginning of the first half now has it. The result is determined by the number of points scored in both halves. Touch-down and goal, 6 points; touch-down without goal, 5 points; goal from the field, 4 points; safety, 2 points. In a practice game for beginners, the halves should not exceed twenty minutes in length. After the players have acquired some skill, the length of the halves may be agreed upon for a longer period; but it is advisable, in practice, never to exceed thirty minutes' play to a half.

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